

THE DARK SIDE



DIGITAL

FATHER OF FRANKENSTEIN

**GANDALF'S
WHALE OF
A TALE**

**Sir Ian
McKellen
EXCLUSIVE!**

FAMILY VALUES
CHARLES MANSON AND
THE MOVIES!

HIGH RISE HELL
THE HEIGHT OF HORROR

TOWER OF EVIL
SNAPE ISLAND MEMORIES

DRILLER THRILLER
DENTIST STAR CORBIN
BERNSEN INTERVIEWED

NASTY MAN
EXPLOITATION WIZARD
MATT CIMBER

DSD - ISSUE 03

BBC

THE STONE TAPE

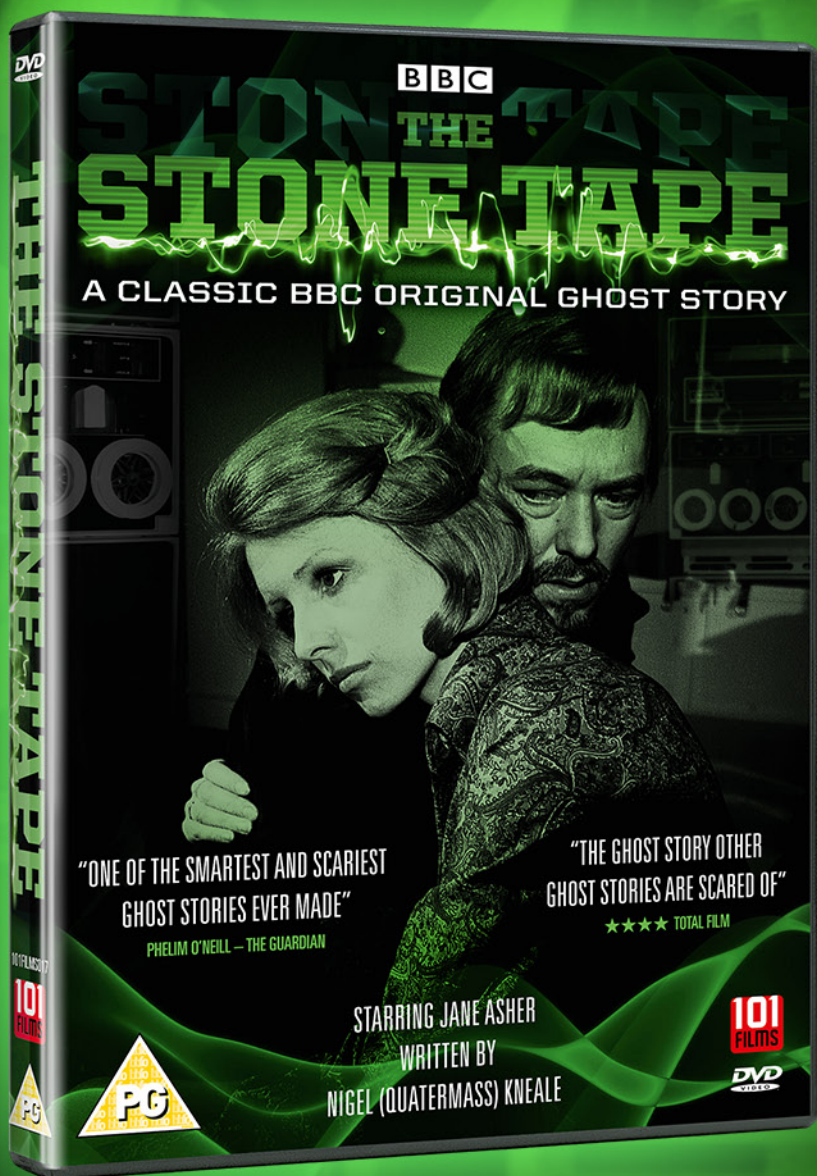
"ONE OF THE UNDISPUTED HIGH POINTS OF HORROR TELEVISION... NIGEL KNEALE'S MASTERFUL MIX OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND THE SUPERNATURAL CAN STILL HAUNT YOU LIKE NO OTHER" PHILIP O'NEILL – THE GUARDIAN

Nigel (Quatermass) Kneale's legendary small screen frightener *The Stone Tape* was originally commissioned as a feature length ghost story for Christmas in 1972. The setting for this creepy classic is a traditionally spooky old house which is bought by an electronics company to house their new recording media research division. The building has been completely renovated apart from one room that the superstitious workmen have refused to enter. Of course computer programmers, Peter (Michael Bryant) and Jill (Jane Asher) are made of sterner stuff and investigate the room, finding nothing more scary than a few tins of pre-war spam and a letter to Santa from a young girl probably now long dead.

Things get a bit more spooky though when the scientists knock down an old wood panel to discover a stone staircase. It is on this that the psychically susceptible Jill sees the ghost of a terrified 19th-century servant girl. Peter believes in what she has seen but treats it as a scientific problem. He thinks that the stone walls have acted like a kind of recording tape to keep replaying this traumatic event and determines to use this ghostly event to further his team's research. But there may be a more frightening secret hidden away within those cold stone walls...

Truly scary, *The Stone Tape* is the small screen equivalent of Robert Wise's *The Haunting* (1963), still the best haunted house movie ever made. The show nabbed a huge audience when first shown and was a significant influence on John Carpenter's 1987 film *Prince of Darkness* in which a group of scientists investigate a mysterious cylinder discovered in the basement of a church. Carpenter even wrote the screenplay under the pseudonym "Martin Quatermass", and included a reference to "Kneale University".





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A WARM WELCOME TO THE DARKSIDE DIGITAL

Hello and welcome to issue 3 of *Dark Side Digital* and what I'm sure you will agree is another compelling mix of interviews and reviews. This issue is largely sponsored by our good friends at 101 Films who are releasing some very interesting titles these days, notably Nigel Kneale's superb BBC ghost story, *The Stone Tape*. If you haven't seen this we really recommend you pick up a copy.

We're mulling over the idea of doing a special - probably in the print issue - on television horror, and no doubt the late Kneale's work will feature prominently in it. Apart from scripting the *Quatermass* shows and the notorious *Year of the Sex Olympics*, the Manxman author adapted *The Woman In Black* in the late 80s, and his version was a darned sight more scary than the recent Hammer movie. This remains frustratingly unavailable on DVD because of some rights issue thing - I think it was withdrawn to avoid conflict with the stage play. There was a DVD release Stateside some years ago but it commands huge prices on the Internet these days.

Talking of TV horror, did any of you see *Utopia*? This dark tale of the search for a mysterious graphic novel predicting the worst disasters of the last century was a stunner from start to finish, and really nasty in places, opening with mass murder in a comic store and a grim scene in which one character's eye was scooped out with a spoon!

The most vicious character, known as Arby, was played by Neil Maskell channelling his ruthless assassin of *The Kill List*, a movie that I thought failed to live up to its early hype. *Utopia*, however, is possibly the best thing I've seen on the box in years. There was stuff in here that I couldn't believe, including a sequence where Arby massacres a group of young school children. What did *The Daily Mail* make of that, I wonder?

It's quite a feat to maintain an air of suspense and dark menace over a six-episode series but writer/creator Dennis Kelly (*Pulling*) managed the task effortlessly, even throwing in some very sly comedy. Highly stylised direction by Marc Munden and Alex Garcia Lopez also helps immensely, with madly colourful camerawork giving every scene a comic book feel. This TV series was shot in full scope widescreen, with characters often framed by large expanses of the environment, and it looked more impressive than most of today's big screen efforts.

I should also mention the excellent and unsettling soundtrack by a certain Cristobal Tapia de Veer, whose previous work includes the underrated Victorian melodrama, *The Crimson Petal and the White*. It surprises me that *Utopia* turned up on Channel 4 without any real hype. I sat down to watch the first episode with no real expectations that it would be anything special. Even after being bowled over by the first show I feared it would not be able to keep up such a high quality over the run. I was wrong. Each new twist and turn seemed to ratchet up the tension even further. If you missed it on telly, I urge you to buy the DVD.

While I'm in the frame of mind for nattering about TV stuff, isn't it gratifying that *The Walking Dead* managed to recover from a disastrously boring second series and emerge in grand gory shape for the third? I almost gave up on it after series 2 but now I'm hooked all over again, especially as Michael Rooker is back on board too.

As I write these words the hype is at last beginning for Brad Pitt's *World War Z*, which has literally been years in the making. Directed by *Quantum of Solace*'s Marc Forster, the film first went before the cameras a couple of years ago but rumours soon started circulating about serious production problems.

The rumours got louder as the budget soared to more than a \$170 million and the studio booked five weeks of complex re-shoots for which *Lost* co-creator Damon Lindelof was brought in to do re-writes. Director Forster seems to be getting the blame, with some reports suggesting he was swamped by such a huge project and even had no firm idea of how the zombies should look, but Brad Pitt doesn't come out of it very well either because he seems to have distanced himself from it and was absent during pre-production filming *Killing Them Softly*.

The trailer for the movie shows that it's going to be extremely spectacular as you might expect from a movie with this kind of budget, but there's also a bit too much CGI for my liking. I do hope it turns out well, but the odds are surely against it.

Allan Bryce.

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Simon Hooper examines the latest craze for high-rise horror and talks with the writer of *Comedown* and the writer/director of *Citadel*...

Since way back when, the tower block has been a great location for disaster (*The Towering Inferno*), action (*Die Hard*) and comedy (*Tower Heist*... oh well, maybe comedy is too strong a word!) and of course let's not forget the recent tale of Danish Princes visiting a grim borough of London in the docu-drama, *Tower Hamlets* (*You're making this up now, aren't you?* – Ed). But spurred on by the success of Joe Cornish's directorial debut *Attack the Block* and its teeth-tastic aliens, cinema has seen a spate of tower-block-terror-themed films. Council-owned, derelict dump, blocks of flats have been taken over by the horror genre. With the astonishing action film *The Raid* and its bone crunching fisticuffs followed by the fantastic *Dredd*, showing just how good a 3D film can be and banishing all memories of Stallone's abominable 1995 attempt ('I am duh Laaaaw!') horror is doing its bit to retake the monolithic structures for itself.

Last autumn we had directing duo James Nunn and Ronnie Thompson's debut, *Tower Block* and its sinister sniper taking out the tenants. In March we have Steven Kendall's *Comedown*, with its chav-stalking serial killer, and this autumn we have, *Citadel*, with its feral zombies.

We first talk with *Comedown*'s writer Steven Kendall about the film and his script for a new *Predator* movie.

TOWER BLOCKS





Above right:
The killer is about to claim another victim in *Comedown*

Hi Steven. In best Hollywood style can you pitch us the idea for *Comedown*?

Well it's an urban youth horror. It's kind of social realism meets survival horror. It's basically a group of urban youths who go up a derelict tower block and set up an aerial for a pirate radio station and what they don't know is that it's what someone calls their home and he's intent on making sure that they never come down.

So let's rewind a bit. It's been almost 10 years since your last film, *Capital Punishment*, and I know you've written a lot of other scripts in that time.

Yeah I've had a lot of commissions.

How difficult is it to get a script produced?

It's incredibly tough. It's finance all the time. It's not so much getting it seen, getting it read. I write very commercial films and it's the producers who have the real slog. As a writer you enjoy writing it and hope someone else likes it. The slog is getting it turned into a film and that's really someone else's load.

How did you get started as a writer?

I used to work in film marketing for Universal and all the other studios as a freelance graphic designer doing poster art work and such. I did that for about ten years and I didn't go the film school route I went a different way and I always felt like I wasn't actually in film even though I was mad about film. I was kind of working in the business I never felt like I was in it so I took a year off and wrote *Capital Punishment*. That got made and then I continued to juggle it with graphic design but I pretty much started to do full time writing. It's been my full time job for a couple of years now. I'm living my dream.

We've had *Attack the Block* and recently we had *Tower Block*. What is the appeal of these grotty, run down block of flats on squalid estates?

Well I think it's a parallel development thing. *Comedown* was written quite a while ago and there were no other scripts doing the rounds set in tower blocks. It's just the process and how long it takes. I'm not quite sure why 2012 seems to be the tower block year with action films as well but what attracted me was I needed a setting that was locked down for our characters. I visited 2 derelict blocks in east London and as soon as I visited them that was it, straight away I had a location, I had a really good haunted house I could play with. It was all there for me. So I thought that this was like a contemporary urban haunted house. I guess you had *Candyman*, but that was pretty much it. But I've just got no idea why for the past two years we've had them. I guess you got these films set there for both action and horror.

So when did you write *Comedown*?

This has taken from 3 years ago to get it made.

How long did it take you to write it?

I did a fair few drafts of it but I guess the time it took to get to a point where someone said, "Alright let's do this." I'd say was a year but then I took on so many other scripts - I'm able to jump back and fore - so I say a year but probably about six months. You know you hear these stories about they wrote a screenplay over a weekend, well I'm not really a believer in that.

Are there any aspects of the script based on your personal experience of these places or types of people?

Well I'm claustrophobic, and one of the characters is claustrophobic. I can't do

lifts but I had to do the lift to get to the top of the block. I didn't want to. So falling down a rubbish shoot would be my worst scenario!

***Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Saw* seem to be a bit of an influence on the film. Is that a fair comment?**

Well I'm not really a fan of torture porn. I kind of like *Saw* because obviously there's an idea there. I wasn't a fan of *Hostel* or things like that. But survival horror like *Wolf Creek* I'm a fan of. It's reality based survival horror and I guess the gore is in the script so it tends to lean that way. If you think about the first part of the film it's social realism like *Kidulthood*. I'm a massive fan of Alan Clarke since I was a kid. So Alan Clarke and horror films were the two main sort of video rentals in the 80's and I've always wanted to do a sort of social realism kind of horror.

You've written quite a lot of thrillers but this is your first horror.

Yeah it's a weird one that. I'm fan of horror but this is my first kind of stab at a horror film. I think because I know those kind of kids and that's the background I'm from so that was an easy way in for me. At the time of writing it the youth were seen as fearless and I wanted to take them to a place where they would have no control.

So what's the appeal of the genre?

Well if I was to choose a film it would usually be sci-fi or a thriller. Horror is third in line but what attracted me to writing a horror was that I knew there was an audience for it and I really wanted to explore a reality based horror film. I wanted to write comedy but my agent said never to write it so I really wanted to write a horror film, the type that would be on your shelf at home.

So from script to screen did the story change much?

We had some improv with the language because with a young cast they know the language that's going on in the street better than I do. But I did a kind of workshop with urban youth and we said to them if some of the language is old hat then just go to town on it. As far as story and structure there were a few switcheroos to what happens later rather than earlier on and one or two changes to the ending which is very different from the original script.

It's a really downbeat ending.

*****SPOILER ALERT*****

It was a lot more of a downer than that! We don't just finish with Ray (the film's villain) burning in his room, he pursues them down the stairs. A 'comedown' to the ground floor! But when they get to the ground floor he's still pursuing them and Lloyd (the film's lead male played by Jacob Anderson) knocks him out with a chain that they cut from the door when they broke in. Ray goes down. They're all exhausted and crash out. When they wake again Ray's crawled a little closer to them and on Jemma's (Lloyd's girlfriend played by Sophie Stuckey) pregnant tummy is a match box and when Lloyd opens it Ray says, 'You've been breeding haven't you?'. And when he opened up the match box it's her embryo. It's basically a payback for when they destroyed the pigeons and laid out their embryos. There was more about Ray seeing them as rats but we didn't have the budget and we wanted to see his point of view as well. It was really grim and dark and no one would do it. Financiers didn't really think we could do it even though in the TV series *Prime Suspect* they showed a foetus in one episode but that was the idea. In one of the scenes he tries to force feed her rat poison. The whole film is about how he (Lloyd) finally saves her (Jemma) and his baby and gets them all the way down to the ground floor but she's already aborted the baby through rat poison. So it was a really grim, horrible ending.

Lloyd ends up inside because they assume that he's lost the plot. He's lost his child and it ends on a park bench with Jemma feeding the pigeons and they fly off to another bench and it's Ray feeding them and that was it. A few kids give him some lip and he sees them as rats and that was the ending. So he was going to be coming back. The end we had was really rushed and we didn't have a lot of time but I'll always go for the grimmest ending possible. I do love a downer but perhaps it was a bit too much. Looking at it now maybe it was too tough but I still would have liked it to have gone out with that ending.

***** END OF SPOILER*****



Above and left: The bored youths who rather foolishly agree to plant a pirate radio transmitter in a derelict highrise in *Comedown*.

Was there anything you think worked better on screen than it did in the script?

I thought the production designer did a really amazing job. I've been in enough estates and they just got it bang on.

Were you able to be on set much?

Well what happened was that a lot of writers don't get the sort of input that I got on this film and I was really happy about it but unfortunately the time that we started filming my mother was diagnosed with cancer so I had to be there for her but if that hadn't happened I'd have been there all the time. I just think that the person who knows most about this is the writer because it's been in his head for the last 2 years and I was really glad that the producer and director were both fine with that.

It's had decent reviews on the festival circuit so why has it not had a theatrical release?

I guess that's down to StudioCanal. I don't know. There's definitely an audience

for it like *Kidulthood*, but that's out of my hands totally. We don't have another UK urban horror at the moment. There's American product which people seem to prefer to see. But it may be word of mouth like *Kidulthood*. As a writer you always want to see a theatrical release but I saw it in Cannes which is the only time I actually saw it in a cinema. We had good reviews at Grimfest but I don't know why it didn't get to FrightFest.

What about your other scripts. I understand you've written a prequel to *Predator* called *Outcast*?

Yeah I'm a massive fan of *Predator*. Didn't like *Predators* at all. How I unwind is in between my own scripts I do spec scripts.

Can you tell us about it?

I'd rather not, to be honest. It's a prequel and it's not contemporary. I'd love to tell you and all writers want to blag on about their ideas.



Above and opposite: Aneurin Barnard as Tommy Cowley, a young father inflicted with chronic agoraphobia and fleeing from a gang of a twisted feral children in *Citadel*.

So what's happening with the script now?

One of the things budget wise is that every *Predator* film has reduced its budget each time and this is a period piece. It's costume and it's sci-fi. They basically don't spend the money on *Predator* franchise any more. That's one of the reasons anyway.

So you're not hopeful about it seeing the light of day then?

Some scripts you have to put to bed and others maybe still have a dream of it and that's one whenever I pitch it they say, "That's great!" It's basically tied to an historical event as well and it's always well received. It's a dream one and I'd love to get the opportunity to pitch it when they're in a better position with that franchise. It leans more towards horror than it does action. But I've also done a prequel to *The Thing*.

Is that a prequel to the 2010 prequel?

Yes

Can you tell me anything about that?

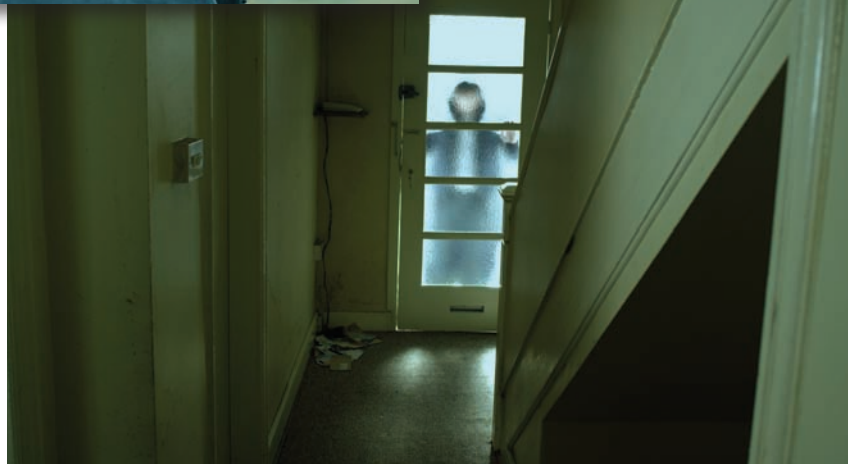
(Laughs) No. Buy me a pint and I'll tell you everything. It's weird because I eventually, finally got into film but as a kid I always wanted to do effects. I was always in *Forbidden Planet* and I wanted to be behind the camera doing effects. I loved all that side of it. It's a real regret that I didn't do that but then I found another way in. I guess I get to control it a little bit too. Are you a fan of remakes?

Some of them

I'm an absolute fan of *The Crazies* and I thought, 'Please don't remake it' but it was actually OK.

So what's definitely coming up next for you?

At the moment for the last three weeks I've been finishing work at 6am because I'm working on a project which is



specifically written for the Gulf region, Doha and the Emirates, and I've always wanted to say this in an interview but, "I really can't talk about it."

It's a feature with a spin off series. I've been writing a lot of material with this one and because of my film marketing background I've done everything, storyboards, pre-viz, the outline, everything. I went out last June to pitch it and they loved it and I'm just waiting to hear. It was targeted for them and we're trying to keep it a bit hush-hush. There's a possibility there'll be multiple directors. It's a shame we're not out in the pub because I'd probably be talking about it but I just can't reveal anything because it's an easy idea for parallel development.

Thanks Steven. Look forward to seeing your take on *Predator* some day.

Next we spoke to *Citadel's* writer/director Ciaron Foy about the attraction of these concrete towers of terror.

Hi Ciaron. What is it about derelict tower blocks that makes them such a draw?

I've no idea why tower blocks have been used in so many genre films of recent year, yet they've been a part of the urban

and suburban landscape for nearly 40 years now. The tower blocks near where I grew up suffered from a complete lack of public amenities. As a result they became notorious, fear-filled places where drugs and crime were rampant. Now, like so many similar places in the UK and Ireland, they are desolate - so in way you could say they are like the concrete/urban version of a haunted house. Perhaps that's the attraction for genre filmmakers today?

Great opening scene set piece. I understand that this is inspired by a true life experience. Can you tell me about more about it?

I've always described *Citadel* as a half psychological horror, half autobiography. It wasn't so much the opening set piece that was specifically inspired by real life, it was more to do with the overall condition of agoraphobia, which was brought on by being the victim of a pretty horrendous attack that I endured at the hands of a gang of youths, who beat me with a hammer and threatened me with a dirty syringe held to my throat. I was eighteen at the time. Following the attack I remained house bound but I didn't have a word for the condition I was

suffering with.

Later that same year I got a letter to say I was accepted into The National Film School of Ireland... I needed to find a way out. Long story short, I began to play around with a script idea that would fuse the experiences I endured and my lifelong love of genre films. *Citadel* was born out of that fusion.

Which genres do you like best and why?

Sci-Fi and horror. I like the extraordinary. I like escapism. I like seeing worlds and scenarios that I could never see in real life. I like how the best of them can tackle questions and themes that would seem almost too heavy-handed in a straight forward drama. And they excite me. I love Hitchcock's quote, "Some films are slices of life. Mine are slices of cake."

You started the script in 2007. What problems did you have getting a first feature film made?

Well the script was tough, as I had to revisit many memories that I would rather forget, in order to access the deserved emotion, fear and atmosphere. It was painful facing the page everyday. Then the main problem you face when it's your first feature film is finding people and financiers that believe and trust in you. Many times they will second guess a lot of what you do because you're seen as a newbie and you have to earn their respect and confidence. Re-drafting the script based on countless notes was hard going, both financially and also mentally, because for me it meant re-opening old wounds again and again. Oddly, being forced to revisit my fears everyday had a positive impact in the long run. The power they have over you begins to diminish the more you stare them in the eye.

Cronenberg, Polanski and Adrian Lyne you've stated as being influences. What specific influences have you taken from them?

Atmosphere. It's a hard thing to get right, as it involves the right synchronicity between all departments. You can't just create atmosphere with music. You can't just create it with your shot choices and framing. But for me, atmosphere and mood are key to a good horror. More specifically to each of those films; you've got creepy kid monsters in hoodies in *The Brood*, a character who slowly going mad and trapped in her own home in *Repulsion*, and a paranoid character in a hellish urban environment, who thinks he sees things that may or not be there in *Jacobs Ladder*.

I understand that *Dumbo* is an influence on the film too

Haha, yes, in a way. One theme I wanted to explore was the notion of self belief. Thematically, *Dumbo* believes he needs a magic feather to fly, not realising this is just a placebo and the real ability lies within himself. Something similar



happens to Tommy in the movie. There's also a lot of elephants in the movie if you go looking for them!

Your location manager has done a fantastic job. Doesn't look the nicest of places to have filmed.

Yeah Tom Jenkins (location manager) found some amazing places that were almost exactly like the concept art. It wasn't easy to shoot in Glasgow during the worst winter on record, with daily temperatures being -19F. Even the abandoned tower block was -10F indoors, because so many windows were smashed. Some locations, like the Clydebank cycle tunnel at night, were legitimately creepy!

I understand that you had to rewrite scenes due to snow. Which ones? Is it true you lost a location because the water pipes burst?

The Priest's kitchen was one. There was also an exterior scene set outside his kitchen that looked really cool and the art department had done an amazing job but it was like a blizzard that day and we had to axe it. There was a whole section after Marie in the tunnel and before Tommy gets on the bus that was really creepy, where he sought shelter in an old woman's house. We had to lose that as we simply couldn't shoot there because of the snow and ice. There were many... We lost a number of locations due to the snow and in some cases were finding a location the day before we had to shoot there. It was constantly evolving and changing. We lost our interior house, found another... The water pipes burst in the tower block. We couldn't shoot there that day but we eventually got back in.

It was a 23 day shoot - that's incredibly tight. What problems did that bring?

I could write a book. It was incredibly arduous, all the more so when you're shooting 6 day weeks and are standing on ice for 11 hours. It would be hard enough on a straight forward drama set in one location but we had a genre film with several locations in -19F temperatures. Throw into the mix; babies, kids in prosthetic make-up, stunts, vfx, sfx.... yeah, it was tough!

You set up a "feral child camp" - how did that work?

Movement specialist Andrew Panton and Seth Lieber worked with the guys playing the feral kids for two days. It was just a way to get them to know each other, to start acting like pack animals, to lock their movements down so that they had a sense of the characters before we got to set and had to shoot quickly. A lot of video game references seemed to do the trick!

Are you going to stay working in horror for your next film?

No, I'm actually working on a sci-fi project next. It has elements of horror I guess but it's very much technology related. It's a very cool project. I think the producers I'm working with will announce it at Cannes.

Thanks Ciaran. Look forward to seeing your sci fi film.

Comedown is out now on DVD & Blu ray - Cert 15.

Citadel is out in cinemas Autumn 2013

What a Carve Up!

The Ed sings the praises of a classic (well, in his eyes, anyway) British horror comedy...



Some may take issue with *What A Carve Up!* (1961) being a classic and yes, I agree, it probably isn't. But I love this movie anyway because it contains everything I enjoy about old dark house films, stirring such a perfect cast into the mix that it can never be repeated and, in my mind, never be bettered.

For a start you've got Sid James and Kenneth Connor. Sid is 'Honest Sid' Butler, who calls himself "a gentleman of the turf." He's the same Sid we saw in the Hancock shows, ducking and diving, a lovable rogue with an eye to the main chance. Diminutive, timid Kenneth is a perfect foil. "I'm not being dragged down in the mire," he says at one point, encouraging Sid to respond with "You've been in the mire all your life, mate," accompanied by his trademark dirty laugh.

The film is supposedly based on *The Ghoul*, previously filmed back in the 30s with Boris Karloff in the lead, but there's little similarity between this and its role model. More *Carry On* than anything else, the plot has proffreader Ernie (Kenneth) being told he may have inherited a fortune from his late Uncle Gabriel.

"I'm a beneficiary," he tells Sid, to which his mate replies. "You filthy swine!"

Travelling to Blackshaw Towers, a creepy mansion in Yorkshire, for the reading of the will puts Ernie's life in danger from a mysterious killer who is bumping off the relatives one at a time with daggers and poisoned darts. 60s horror icon Michael Gough (*Horrors of the Black Museum*) is the lumbering manservant Fisk and Michael Gwynn (who played the monster in Hammer's *Revenge of Frankenstein*) is a memorably lopsided grotesque as Cousin Malcolm, always banging on about the family being "Quite mad," until he cops it while playing the organ.

Donald Pleasence is wonderfully sinister as always and he is the one who plays his part absolutely straight. He's the solicitor who scares Ernie by turning up at his door late at night while Sid's out getting "fish and chips twice." Then there's the tragic Dennis Price a former officer and "one time gentleman" who has a severe drink problem. This was true of Price in real life, so you can see that he is more or less playing himself, with an element of sadness behind the humour. Dotty Esma Cannon is also on hand as the mad aunt who thinks things will

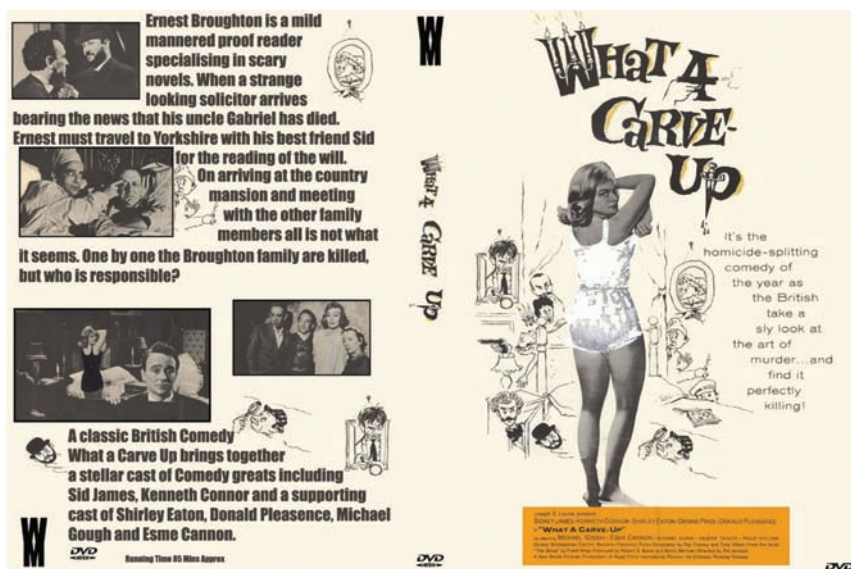
be better when Mrs Pankhurst gets women the vote... even though the film is set in the 60s. Oh, and lookout for Adam Faith in a cameo at the end. I'd place this alongside *The Ghost Train* and *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* as one of my favourite horror comedies.

The jokes are corny in the extreme and even include such schoolboy howlers as Sid James pointing at a trophy of a moose's head on the wall and saying "Blimey, he must have been going like a bomb when he hit that wall."

I really like the opening scenes where Sid asks Ernie about the horror books he has read that night. "I started off with *The Battered Body In The Basement* and ended up with *The Fiend In The Second Floor Flat*," Ernie replies, to which Sid says, "He gets about a bit, doesn't he?"

For years it was impossible to get hold of a decent copy of *What A Carve Up*, but thankfully Anchor Bay redressed the balance in 2008 when they put out a fine quality fullscreen edition. Though still a little scratchy in places, the movie looks much better than any TV prints I have ever seen and has strong levels of contrast throughout.

Such is the quality of the picture that you can plainly see that the book Kenneth is reading at the start is actually a *Pan Book of Horror Stories* with a shoddily drawn new cover. Sadly there are no extras at all... not even a trailer. But it's great to have *What a Carve Up!* in my library, for a cosy late night treat that can't be beat.



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FAMILY VALUES

Dark Side looks into Tinsel Town's ongoing fascination with the Charles Manson killings.

On the evening of August 8, 1969, Charles "Tex" Watson, Susan Atkins, Patricia Krenwinkel, and Linda Kasabian visited 10050 Cielo Drive in Los Angeles. They were not invited guests. They were there on the instruction of Charles Manson, and their mission was mass murder.

Ex convict and aspiring musician Manson chose the address because he thought the house belonged to record producer Terry Melcher, son of Doris Day. Melcher hadn't given Manson the recording deal he wanted and it was payback time. Or not, because the house was now being rented to film director Roman Polanski, who was out of town at the time.

Instead of Melcher, 18-year-old student Steven Parent, noted hairstylist Jay Sebring, aspiring screenwriter Wojciech Frykowski and coffee heiress Abigail Folger were shot and stabbed to death along with Polanski's actress wife Sharon Tate and her unborn child. They were in the wrong place at the wrong time. But the killing was not over.

The very next day, Manson, Tex Watson, Susan Atkins, Patricia Krenwinkel, Steve Grogan, Leslie Van Houten, and Linda Kasabian went to the home of supermarket executive Leno LaBianca and his dress shop owner wife Rosemary. After Manson left, he told Van Houten and Krenwinkel to go in and kill the LaBiancas. The three separated the couple and murdered them with bayonets, then had dinner and a shower.

The killings were like something out of a horror movie, and they struck fear into the heart of America. Months later, when Manson and his weird 'Family' were arrested, they proved every bit as scary as their celluloid counterparts - especially the wild-eyed, bearded cult leader himself.

It emerged that Manson believed an apocalyptic race war was just round

the corner, an event he termed "Helter Skelter," from the song of the same name by The Beatles. Manson believed that his murders would help precipitate that war.

There were also rumours, never proven to be true, that the Family had used stolen TV equipment to film satanic orgies and snuff movies. These were reputed to have been buried in the desert by Family members and were never found.

You might have expected Hollywood to feel somewhat sensitive about brutal murders affecting their own community. But such sensational events could not be ignored, and in the last forty-odd years, numerous films have been made which were inspired, directly or otherwise, by the story.

Probably the best known was the 1976 *Helter Skelter*, originally a two-part mini-series based on the book of the same name by prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi which highlighted Manson's obsession with The Beatles, and their *White Album* in particular. An illiterate version of Charlie's favourite track ('Helter Skelter') was daubed in blood on the walls of the crime scene.

The Stunt Man's Steve Railsback made a most effective Manson, but actor Jeremy Davies gave an even scarier portrayal of him in a strong 2004 TV remake of *Helter Skelter*. Best known for his starring role in David O. Russell's 1994 *Spanking the Monkey*, Davies captures Manson's chilling sociopathic manner to perfection, showing the dark charisma and way with words that he used to brainwash others into doing his dirty work.

Manson himself never killed anyone, and in many ways he could be compared to later, equally twisted, cult leaders like Jim Jones, only Charlie preached mass murder rather than mass suicide. Charlie's family was largely made up of middle class underachievers looking for a purpose in life.

What intrigued young director Jim Van Bebber was that *Helter Skelter* told the story entirely from the prosecutor's perspective. Having done extensive research into the subject himself, Van Bebber wanted to delve into the cult's story for his own movie.

The result was *The Manson Family*, a labour of love that took 15 years of his life to complete. Few people ever thought this would go beyond the 'rough cut', which played at several film festivals under the original title *Charlie's Family*, but in 2002, Anchor Bay stumped up the remaining several grand to finish the edit and sound mix.

After spending so much time on the film, Van Bebber must have been delighted to get his movie out there at last, and after a successful if small scale theatrical release it became a modest hit on DVD for Anchor Bay UK.

Mind you, *The Manson Family* wasn't made to appeal to mainstream viewers. It was a raw and unpleasant movie with a scratchy, 16 mm look, definitely not for all tastes, but nevertheless strangely effective in its portrayal of Charlie's macabre world.

There are many movies that may have been 'inspired' by the Manson killings, including Russ Meyer's *Beyond The Valley of the Dolls* (1970) and Rob Zombie's *The Devil's Rejects* (2005), but for the purpose of this article we will only be looking at the movies that have



Right: Steve Railsback as Charles Manson in the award-winning TV movie, *Helter Skelter*.



been directly based on the exploits of Charles Manson and his freaky "family", such as *The Manson Massacre* (1972).

Filmed as *The Cult*, his trashy exploitationer is a cheap and nasty horror movie with lots of sex and nudity thrown in. As played in a plank-like fashion by Makee K. Blaisdell, Manson (or Invar as he's called here) sleeps in a casket and has had a charisma bypass.

The only reason to see the movie is to appreciate the busty charms of the legendary Russ Meyer favourite, Uschi Digard as one of the Manson girls. The film doesn't make any pretense to being a true story and it portrays the victims of the mass murder as drugged-up swingers who seal their doom by inviting the cult members into their home in the first place. The murders are shown at the end but portrayed in a largely bloodless and unconvincing fashion.

Latching on to the missing Manson home movies theme, *Snuff* was a miserable little exploitation movie about a Manson-style gang who massacre a pregnant actress and her friends. It was originally shot in 1971 as *The Slaughter* and sat on the shelf for some time before an enterprising producer (Allen Shackerton) revived it with a fake ending.

Then it became a "snuff" film, with a four minute sequence in which a woman was brutally murdered "on camera." Her fingers are cut off and then she is disembowelled, but this is all so patently phoney that the only people who swallowed it were those too squeamish to sit through the picture in the first place.

Billed as a "legendary atrocity," *Snuff* does indeed live up to this description. It's quite simply one of the worst films you are ever likely to see. The ultimate joke is that this

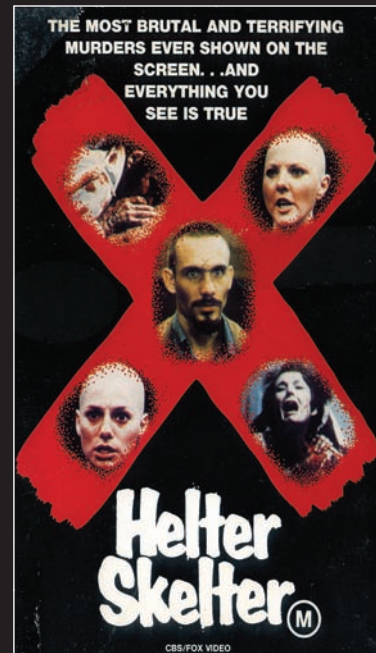
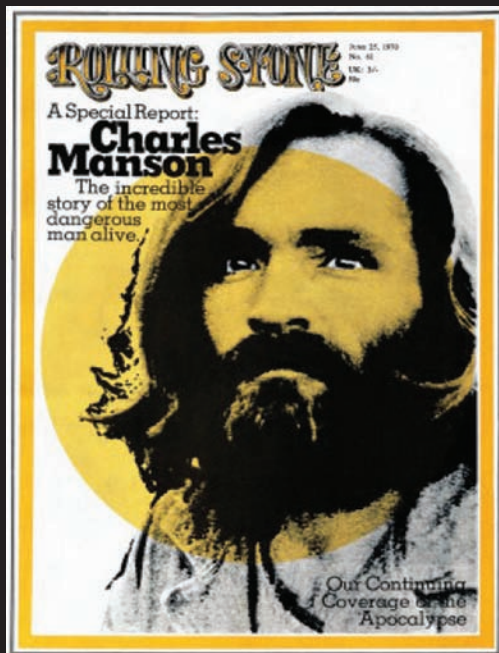
Cheerleader. Prom Queen. Manson Girl.



Leslie, My Name is Evil

BY ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS A NEW REAL FILMS PRODUCTION A MADCLUE-FEMMINE FILM
GREGORY SMITH KRISTEN HAGER RYAN ROBBINS
PETER KELLEDIAN KRISTIN ADAMS KANGHTHO HORN ANJELICA SCANNURA SARAH GADON TRAVIS MILNE TOM BARNETT PETER MACNEILL TRACY WRIGHT AND DON MCKELLAR
LESLIE, MY NAME IS EVIL
EDITED BY KATHY WELKAMP CASTING DIRECTOR JERRY LEVINS EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS SARAH KAY COSTUME DESIGNER SARAH MELLMAN PRODUCTION DESIGNER MARK GABRIEL
SOUND EDITOR NICHOLAS STEVE MURPHY LOU SOLANOFF DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY JONATHAN CLIFF
CO-PRODUCER AVA FROENKELN EXECUTIVE PRODUCER JOHN HAMILTON PRODUCED BY JENNIFER JONAS & LEOCARO FARLINGER DIRECTED BY REGINALD HARKISSA





extremely pathetic little film became one of the most banned titles in the UK.

The Love Thrill Murders aka *Sweet Saviour* cast former teen idol Troy Donahue in the role of Charlie - or the charismatic cult leader Moon as he's known here. A pregnant starlet calls on his hippy gang to organise an orgy in her home and it all ends in bloodshed as the cult members turn on their rich hosts, who they think to be "pigs." It's all in very bad taste and for some reason set in New York City rather than Los Angeles.

Manson (1973) was directed by Robert Hendrickson and Laurence Merrick. Nominated for an Academy Award at the time it's a fascinating documentary featuring interviews with the members of the group, including Charles Manson, "Squeaky" Fromme, and Sandra Good.

The film also brings us original footage of the Charles Manson Family at their Spahn Ranch compound and various other locations. The film has contributions from Manson follower Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, and when she tried to assassinate President Gerald Ford the documentary was banned in order to preserve her constitutional right to a fair trial. Co-director Laurence Merrick was shot dead in 1977 by an unknown assailant and at the time the press reported the killer was thought to have been a Manson follower. Nothing was ever proved, however.

The film's co-director, Robert Hendrickson, later cut together a lot of unused footage from Manson to make a new documentary feature, *Inside The Manson Gang* (2003). Not widely shown it has generally been criticised for its overly melodramatic approach, which is heightened by an annoyingly obvious narrative

track from the director: "This is the room where the family orgies took place. They possibly had a few human sacrifices there too." Yeah, right.

Charles Manson Superstar (made in 1989 released in 2002) is another documentary, directed by Nikolas Schreck. The film is largely made up of an interview with Manson himself, filmed inside San Quentin Prison. Schreck seems to idolise the creepy old guy and refers to him as a political prisoner.

It also contains brief footage of the Spahn Ranch where Manson's gang lived, and Manson's own songs on the soundtrack: "Clang Bang Clang" and "Mechanical Man" from the album *LIE The Love and Terror Cult*.

The Book of Manson (1989) is an obscure and bizarre homage to Charlie directed by renowned artist Raymond Pettibon. It's impossible to see these days but from an excerpt on youtube looks pretty unwatchable anyway.

Manson Family Movies (2003) was written, directed, produced by a certain John Aes-Nihil (not his real name) and hooks onto the popular idea that Charlie and his gang made snuff movies using stolen camera equipment. If they look as bad as these out-of-focus 8mm efforts then they should stay buried. This was never properly released, not because the filmmakers were scared of repercussions from Manson followers. More likely they were terrified of the lawsuits that would inevitably follow their nicking Pink Floyd and The Beatles music for the soundtrack.

Live Freaky! Die Freaky! (2003) is perhaps the oddest Manson flick of all. This stop motion-animated musical, directed by John Roecker, has a 3069 Nomad mistaking an ancient copy of the book "Helter Skelter" for the Bible, with Charles Hanson

Above:
The notorious video nasty, *Snuff*, was 'inspired' by the Manson murders.

(a deliberate name change) as the messiah. The Manson, or Hanson murders are then re-enacted in a blackly comic manner and the nomad carves an X into his forehead!

To bring us almost up to date, *The Six Degrees of Helter Skelter* (2009) is a documentary about the which revisits over 40 locations related to the infamous Tate/LaBianca murders, and ties together the dozens of odd connections between Charles Manson and the Hollywood elite. Yes, we expect Kevin Bacon is in there somewhere.

Though more about Manson's victims than the man himself, this is nevertheless essential viewing for anyone interested in the Manson case, with lots of background info including never-before-seen autopsy reports, dozens of rare photographs and original Manson Family music recordings.

Finally, *Leslie: My Name Is Evil* (2009), aka *Manson Girl*, is a rather odd look at the Manson story taken from real accounts and transcripts of his trial. Here the story is told from the fictionalised perspective of Leslie Van Houten, one of Charlie's clan who participated in the killings of Rosemary and Leno LaBianca.

The movie contrasts Leslie's story with that of Perry, an idealistic college student who actively opposes the Vietnam War. Placed on the jury for the Manson murder trial, Perry becomes obsessed with Leslie and with understanding her motives.

Not entirely successful, the film is nevertheless a valid attempt at exploring the kind of social and political pressures that can turn a homecoming queen into a cold-blooded murderess.

The real Van Houten will be eligible for parole this year, but it's somewhat unlikely she will get it. Like Charlie himself, it seems almost certain she will die in jail.

WHALE O



Sir Ian McKellen, the definitive Gandalf in Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* franchise, talks to Mark Campbell about *Frankenstein*, *The Wizard of Oz*, crazed Nazis, the ghost of James Whale and life down a Welsh mine...

He may be one of this country's finest and most in-demand actors, but Sir Ian McKellen is also one of the nicest, most generous men you could hope to meet. As Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, and Magneto in the *X-Men* series, he has become synonymous with some of the biggest fantasy blockbusters in film history. But he's done a few honest-to-goodness horror films too, and *The Dark Side* tracked him down one sunny October afternoon to discuss a few of them with him. Perhaps his most important contribution to the genre was when he played 1930s horror maestro James Whale in the 1998 biopic *Gods and Monsters*...

How did you get involved with the project?

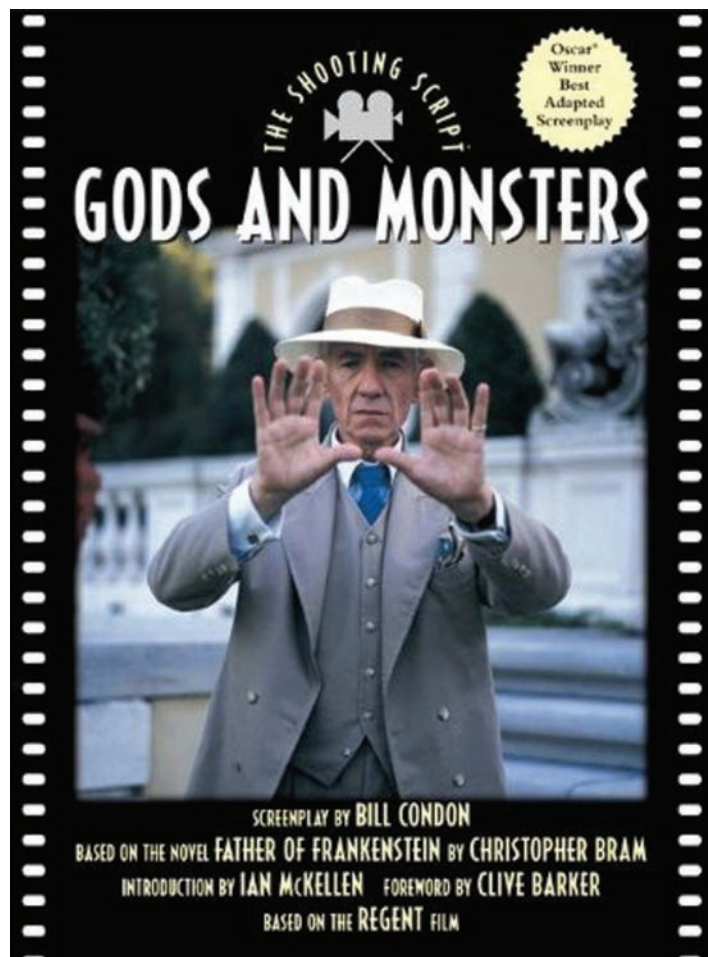
Well, it was originally a novel called *The Father of Frankenstein*, written by Christopher Bram, an American. That title was not used because Brendan Fraser, who was in the film, didn't like the idea that his fans might think he was slumming it by making yet another remake of *Frankenstein*! So they changed it to *Gods and Monsters*. A friend of mine, who is an agent for the book, thought it would make a wonderful film script, and that I should be involved. The script was written by Bill Condon, who had read the book and agreed with the agent, but actually had the idea that Peter O'Toole might play it. And the agent said that if that

F A T A L E



This page:
Sir Ian as Magneto
in *The X-Men* films.

Opposite:
As James Whale in
Gods and Monsters,
as Doctor Theodore
Cuza in *The Keep*,
and as Gandalf in
Lord of the Rings.



happened, the film would be an absolute flop; he couldn't be more wrong for the part. So they suggested me, and it was just about the time that my film of *Richard III* had come out, so people outside England were aware of me a bit more, and were thinking, "Oh well, it's perhaps not just someone who shouts in the evening." And so I read the screenplay and it immediately appealed to me on a number of levels. Firstly, it was a leading part in a movie that was going to be filmed in Hollywood, which would be very intriguing. I like Bill Condon enormously, James Whale was a gay man like myself, it was an American movie in which I could use my own accent, and of course on top of all that, the story was absolutely riveting and beautifully told. So it was just tick, tick, tick all the way.

Were you aware of James Whale's reputation as a director?

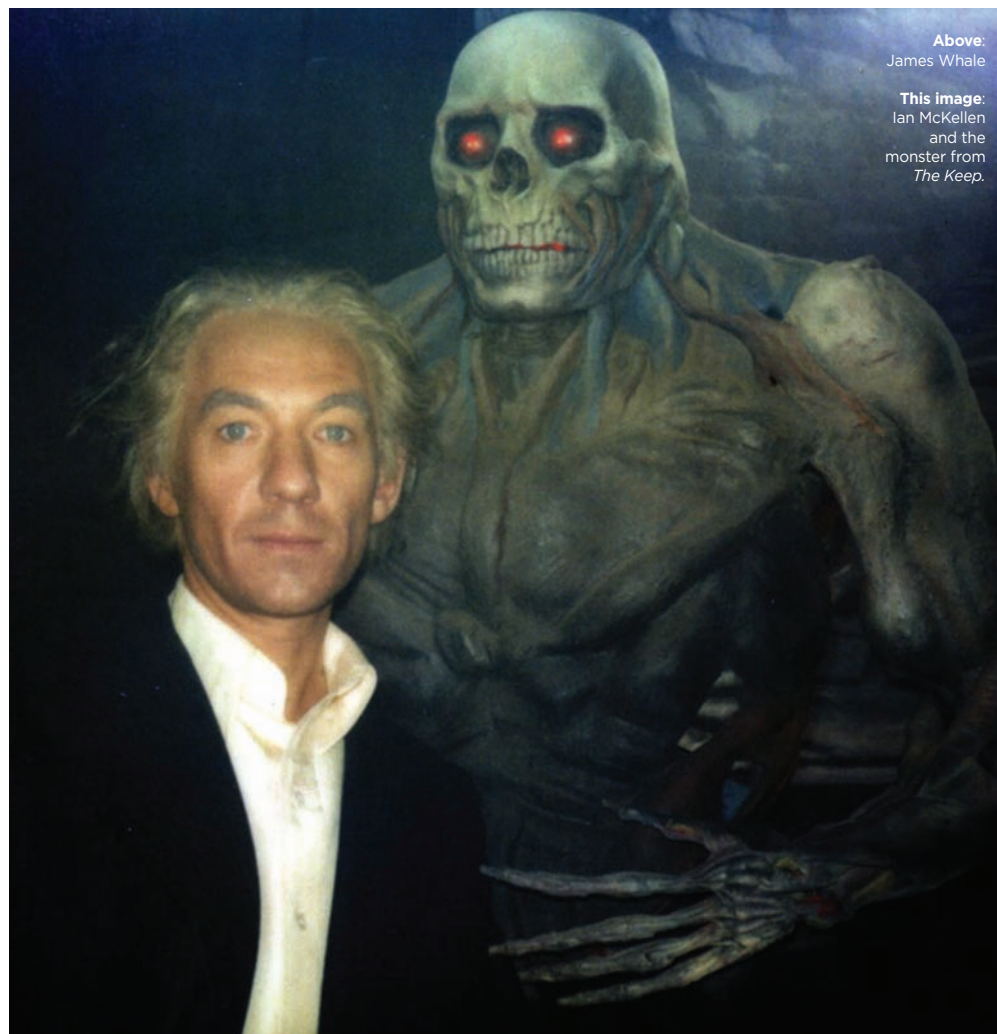
I hadn't had a particular interest in horror movies and I didn't know about James Whale, although I'd seen his *The Invisible Man* and liked it. But once I looked at his other films, of course I realised that there was a very interesting, camp quality that he brought to his storytelling. The tongue was often in the cheek, and he was telling stories on two levels, one for the popular audience, but there was always a wink on the side to those who were in the know. There was a jokiness which underpinned it all.

But *The Old Dark House* is terrifying!

Yes, but it's played over the top, especially by Ernest Thesiger.

Did you do any research into Whale, or was there enough information in Condon's script?

Well, I've long since realised you're on a hiding to nothing when you say to someone who's toiled over a script, "Why don't we go back to the original source material?" Because that's what *they've* done! Anyway, it's not really my job. So I take a script very much at its face value. That said, in the original script there was a sequence from the book about an opening at Grauman's Chinese Theatre, with stars like Greta Garbo, but it was too expensive to film.



Above:
James Whale

This image:
Ian McKellen
and the
monster from
The Keep.



Did you visit Whale's stamping ground while you were there?

Yes, we went round to the house where he lived and died. It had belonged to Goldie Hawn and she'd ripped out everything, there was no evidence of him left. But when we went, the current owner said to us: "When we moved in, there was evidence of a ghost here and it was very unsettling. It was the ghost, we decided, of James Whale who killed himself in the garden." So we all got very excited — me, Bill Condon and a writer called Curtis Harrington who had known James Whale when he was a young man. Then she said, "So we had him exorcised!". So here was a group of people who would have loved nothing better than to meet James Whale's ghost - and she'd got rid of him!

Did you meet anyone who remembered him?

I eventually went to meet the man who had played the boy in *Journey's End*, which was the film that brought Whale to Hollywood. He directed it as a play here with Laurence Olivier, then in a film with Colin Clive. David Manners was his name and he was, I think, in his hundredth year, lying on a bed in a hospice waiting to die. In fact, when we left, he whispered in my ear, "You can go back to Hollywood and say you met David Manners on his death bed." And I also met Roddy McDowall, who knew Whale and other people in the film. There was a sense in Hollywood that really we were being a bit hard on George Cukor (played by Martin Ferrero) and that we shouldn't be stressing that Whale was a gay man. They didn't really like it. Others thought it was wonderful.

Was his sexuality the principal appeal for you?

Yes, because it was at a time when gay rights were thriving but not really getting anywhere, in that country and in this. Yet here was someone who could stand as a beacon, because there he was in the '30s,

openly gay. Quite extraordinary. Although he would have been surprised, I think, to find he was being lauded for something that he just took for granted. I was actually more interested in all that than I was in the idea of his film career. But they rebuilt the set for *Bride of Frankenstein*, and there were the characters all done up as they are in the film.

And not a bit of CGI to be seen!

Oh no, all done in the oldest working studio in Hollywood that had once belonged to Pickfair, to Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks Jnr. And it still had its original glass roof because they used to use the natural sunlight to film, not that we used it of course.

You're not thought of as a 'horror actor' in the way that, say, Christopher Lee might be, although you played opposite him in *The Lord of the Rings* — but one of your early films was a horror flick called *The Keep*...

Yes, it was, Michael Mann directed that. And, I suppose, *Apt Pupil*, do you know that? It was an adaptation of a Stephen King novella, which was a very nasty story indeed about a Nazi camp commandant who's hiding in California and has his past resurrected, though it's not strictly horror. But yes, *The Keep* — rather let down by its monster! It didn't look good at all.

Sometimes it's best not to see it.

(Laughs) Yes exactly! But there was some wonderful photography in that. It was filmed in Wales, in Betws-y-Coed, in an old underground mine. It rained all the time. I nearly went mad. I was called time and time again and not used.

More recently you made *Asylum* — nothing to do with the classic 1972 *Amicus* portmanteau film?

No, the asylum in question is Broadmoor. It was based on a novel by Patrick

McGrath, whose father was a doctor at Broadmoor and as a boy he was brought up there.

It was a very nasty story about a doctor who deliberately keeps a woman there so he can abuse her and eventually marry her. It was a horrible story really. But it didn't work as far as the public was concerned.

When you appear in films with a horror theme, do you still play it for real, or do you tailor your performance for different genres?

Well, you take it with the same seriousness as a performer as you would whatever it was. My only judgement of a script is, "Is it good of its type?" Whether it's a pantomime or an adaptation of Tolkien or the *X-Men*, which are sort of horror movies, aren't they?

So I don't draw any distinctions as an actor. You then go along with the style and that'll be very much up to the director. He might want it pumped up a bit and exaggerated, and I'll go with that. But in this post-Freudian age, actors basically play characters as though they are real people. Though if you're in a farce, the reality is exaggerated, if it's tragedy then it's the same. So you go with the style.

What's the scariest film you've seen?

I would say that is probably *The Wizard of Oz*. I saw it when it first came out. *Bambi*, of course, is very, very upsetting. I've never become a horror fan, but I know many people who are in Hollywood. I mean, they're crazy about it and they collect all the stuff, you know. Peter Jackson, director of *Lord of the Rings*, he loves it all.

Well, he's done a few himself, hasn't he?

If I'd seen them before I did *Lord of the Rings* I don't think I'd have ever accepted the job!

No, he loves blood, although there's no red blood in those or *The Hobbit*, in order to get the classification for the kids to see it. They have black blood, but not red!

Above:
Sir Ian McKellen,
Edward Alderton
Theatre Chair - Sarah
O'Hanlon, and writer
Mark Cambell
attending the Little
Theatre Guild (LTG)
Southern Regional AGM

DRILLER THRILLER

Corbin Bernsen has played a demented dentist, a Los Angeles lawyer and even battled King Kong! When *The Dark Side*'s Calum Waddell pops in for a check up he chats about a long and varied acting career in cult classics...

C

orbin Bernsen is probably most fondly remembered by readers of this fine magazine for his leading man role in Brian Yuzna's wonderfully demented *The Dentist* (1996) and its 1998 sequel. However, prior to his joining the horror hierarchy as the psychotic tooth-doctor, Bernsen had established himself in the television mainstream with his part in *L.A. Law*, which cast him as the dislikeable divorce lawyer Arnie Becker in one of the most successful American shows of the late eighties. Naturally, the phenomenal profile achieved by *L.A. Law* allowed Bernsen to go onto major roles in such hits as the enjoyable baseball comedy *Major League* (1989 – the actor would also return for the film's 1994 flop sequel) and Carl Reiner's acclaimed *Bert Rigby, You're a Fool*. However, the performer seemed to find his true niche in amongst the blood and thunder of the horror genre – following up *The Dentist* with the likes of *Inhumanoid* (1996), *Raptor* (2001), the *Masters of Horror* entry *Right to Die* (2007) and snake-shocker *Vipers* (2008). Maintaining such work with his role in the successful television show *Psych*, as well as his notable turn in the smash *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* (2005), *The Dark Side* caught up with Bernsen to discuss his career in and out of the gore-score for the following enlightening chat...



Let's begin with *The Dentist* – I rate the movie very highly but it was a surprise when you were cast in it. You were having quite a lot of success with *LA Law* at the time and *The Dentist* was not a mainstream role to be doing on the back of that...

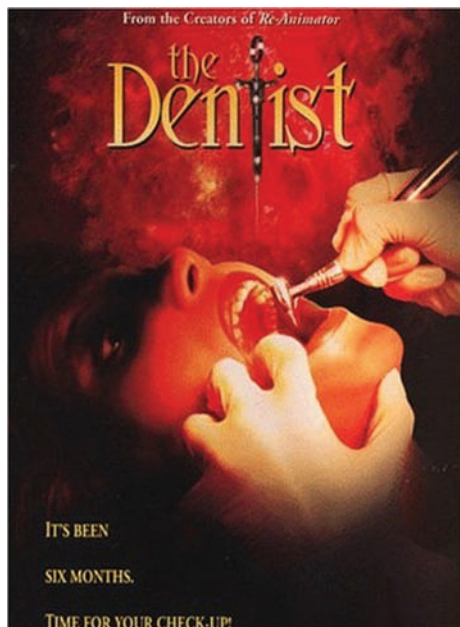
Yeah, people asked me, "Why did you take the job? What appealed to you about the character?" I got all the usual questions. I would usually say that the character was appealing, he had a certain flipside that wasn't on the page, but – to be honest – *The Dentist* was just one of the most brilliant scripts about a man

with the greatest of intentions. Although he went a little bit over the top about cleanliness and all that, his wife has an affair at the most disgusting level and it simply turns him into a monster. The simplicity of that is great – it's the McDonalds theory: you can drive through and get a hamburger, well what a brilliant idea! Starbucks: another simple idea. *The Dentist* is also so simple – and wonderful to me because I got to be this guy that was betrayed by his wife and it turns him into a monster.

And Brian Yuzna really knows how to hit the right buttons with that movie

and get under your skin – he's one of the more underrated "Masters of Horror"...

Yeah, you are right. You know, all of these "Masters of Horror" directors – the Brian Yuznas, the George Romero, the John Carpenters... if you talk to any of them, even though it appears to be a zombie movie or whatever, there is always something socially conscious underneath. Even if it isn't in the story it is usually there and that is why they are the "Masters" and the kids that imitate them are exactly that: imitators. All they can come up with is a zombie or something



Above: Open wide and say goodbye. If you thought *Marathon Man* was bad wait until you see *The Dentist*. Corbin is also seen in his *L.A. Law* days.

going, “Uerrrrgh” with outstretched hands, you know? (*Laughs*) The true “Masters” are well read and they can talk on a different level. That is what makes them such great storytellers.

Going back to the original question though, *The Dentist* obviously threw your *L.A. Law* fans a massive curveball...

Well I’m a curveball kind of guy (*laughs*). I chose a long time ago, and this was perhaps to my detriment, not to have the typical Hollywood ladder climb as my game. I wanted to be more of an experimenter on all levels. I had some success at the beginning and, look, I will also say that I never did a film straight out of *L.A. Law* in the way that Bruce Willis had *Die Hard*, which took him onto another path. I never had that so I had to be a bit more inventive and I believe that necessity is the mother of invention and I invented my career in such a way that I feel like an explorer. The fact that people can’t pin me down is not by design – I’m interested in this and that and, right now, I’m really into ultra-low budget digital filmmaking. I mean, genre is not necessarily important but the way we make

movies and distribute films... People still say they don’t understand some of the projects I’m involved in but, to me, it is all just a road of experimentation. The horror thing – that was a no brainer for me and, again, I read the script and thought, “this is brilliant.” One commonality between my characters, and which is certainly in *The Dentist*, is that I love guys who appear to be one thing but who have another thing entirely going on – and some people only play that on the surface level. Like Arnie Becker in *L.A. Law* – yes, he’s successful, he has a Porsche, hot women and he’s a high, celebrated attorney but close the door and he is the most miserable fucker in the world. I love that dichotomy of character. With the Yuzna film - Alan Feinstone is a successful, wealthy dentist with a beautiful wife but turn the other corner and his wife is giving a blow job to a pool man with greasy hair and, boom, there is the monster underneath – which I believe we all have inside us.

Did you ever get to see *The Dentist* with an audience? There’s a sequence which I find almost impossible to watch – it’s the scene where you drill away at a

woman’s tooth and your mind drifts on to something else and you, basically, destroy her molar. It’s very nasty and I’d like to hear how an audience might have reacted to that...

No, I’ve never seen the movie with an audience, I’ve only seen it on the television screen – never seen it large, actually, but I know what that would feel like... just like some of the things I have seen in the *Jackass* movies (*laughs*), Putting shit in your mouth and stuff. But, yeah, I love what my career has become – I’m still doing *Psych* - a nice hit show and, you know, I also have this little place in the horror movie – I love that man, I love it.

Can you talk about finding your character in *The Dentist*?

I tell you something about *The Dentist*, man, and it’s very odd – I went very deep into the zone, if you will, and I was not pleasant to be around, not good to go home to my family and I sort of remember working with Brian and having our open court. To go to the place where that had to be, and you could see veins literally fucking popping out of my head - that was not something I could just turn on. I couldn’t go and socialise with the crew and people still come up to me and say, “I was in *The Dentist* with you” and I don’t remember. I sometimes even forget which one was *The Dentist* and *The Dentist 2* but, of course, now you bring him up I remember who he is...

You had Clint Howard in *The Dentist 2*...

Yeah, Clint I remember but I know Clint personally. It’s odd - I don’t even remember what part of *L.A. Law* we were even in with that movie.

Were you surprised that there was a *Dentist 2*?

No, I had heard that *The Dentist* had been the number one video tape in Europe or something. So I was just waiting for them to say, “We’re going to do *The Dentist 2* now but we’re not paying you as much” and that is kind of what happened (*laughs*).

Wow, really?

Yeah – but we worked it out in the end. I said, “Okay let me get this straight – you did *The Dentist* part one, which did phenomenally well, and you are going to do part two but want to pay me half?” So they made me a producer nod on *The Dentist 2* and rarely has stuff like that been about money anyway – I can go make money elsewhere. I can whore myself off somewhere if it lets me do stuff like that, which is not for the kind of money I would like to be making. I mean, it would be wonderful to be this huge star who gets millions and millions of dollars for doing these kinds of things but, again, it’s not that I don’t do well but not being one of those high salary pre-madonnas has also forced me to do projects that I care about and which are not really about the money. I have no problems with that.

You appear briefly in the 1976’s remake of *King Kong* – I read the “making of” book on that movie and it sounds as if it was hell on earth. With your limited experience on the set, what was it like?



Left:
Corbin as he is
today.

Well I will tell you what happened with that. I was a very young actor, just starting out, and I just got my SAG card. There was a call – they wanted seven actors and what I had done was basically glorified background work – and they must have seen hundreds of us. I don't remember quite how it came about but I went for an audition - at what was MGM Studios at the time - and I was picked out as one of the seven people. I'm still asked, "Where were you in *King Kong*?" Well – if you really look closely, just before Kong breaks lose I go up to Jessica Lange and if you listen carefully you can hear it in the chatter. I grab her and say, "Turn around for a picture honey" and I think I am the last person to manhandle her before Kong goes crazy. Now, that took two weeks to do – and it wasn't that it was hell on earth it's just... Well, to give you an idea: the scene with Jessica was filmed on a huge outdoor arena, they actually built that. It is no longer there – it's now all condominiums - but it was where the old *Gone with the Wind* house was. Then there was this big parking lot where Kong was going around and squishing people and that was literally a parking lot right there. They built this huge stadium and the reason it took two weeks just to do the scene where he breaks loose is that the huge animatronic Kong that they had - if he raised his arm then that was that you got for that night. It took 24 hours to re-set, so they used to shoot it and you'd get the arm going up, and then they'd shoot the eye opening or something but they could only do one thing... it took them hours and hours to do it. So they would only get a part of it and then they would film reactions – Jessica up close – but it looks pretty seamless when you see it. It was a blast for me, it was all night shoots and as a young actor you were getting paid and I knew it was a big movie - and it had Charles Grodin as well who, off the camera, was just one of the smartest story tellers you would ever hear. But I was a little peon, I didn't have a start trailer or anything – it was very humbling.

When you did *LA Law* you were like the rival - or alternative - show to *Law and Order*, is that right?

No, we were on the same network – ABC – we weren't rivals. I believe we preceded *Law and*

Order. You might have to check that but I think that was right. We started in '87.

What were the demands of acting in such a popular television show?

It was a huge leap in my career so I didn't look at the demands. It was the chance of a lifetime, a huge show, hugely successful and I was buying a corvette and having a blast. But the battle came with other things – like trying to remember where we came from and how excited we were in the first year. As you see with any series, when someone gets a lot of success it becomes, "Please come see U2 in Holland" or "we want you in this film" and you are trying to work out your schedule with the show and it becomes a pain in the ass because they can't accommodate it... That was the only difficult thing in year three and four, and then I had a family and different demands came from that, but one thing I did do was I recognised *LA Law* as my ticket to the kingdom. I realised early on that these offers were coming to me because of the show. So I was smart enough to do a couple of movies whenever we had a hiatus and you see actors leaving successful television shows after one or two years because they think they have a movie career. David Caruso left *NYBD Blue* because he thought he had a movie career and then nothing happened until *CSI* and it is funny because I was watching some commercial for *CSI* and I think David is a wonderful actor. I think that he came back and thought, "Wow, this is actually a really good gig." You can have it all – at least that is what I've always thought. I mean, even with a series like *LA Law* where you are there basically eight and a half months a year – well you have still got nearly four more months, so do a couple of movies in-between and have a month's break, you know? There are ways of making things work. I did a movie last year and shot it at weekends.

You were third billed in the recent hit *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* – I presume you must still be happy with the major roles that Hollywood occasionally offers you? Yeah, I'm the bad guy in that movie so I guess that qualifies as having an important role (*laughs*). I have some good scenes and I was

just delighted to be involved. I would say that *LA Law* was one of the finest scripts I have ever read but for just the pure pleasure of reading scripts – Shane Black, to me, always writes some of the most fascinating stuff and I was a fan of his even before *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*. His scripts are like novels – he really knows how to speak to an audience. So I was thrilled to be working with him and I got a call, just out of the blue, asking me if I wanted to be in this film. But what was fascinating is that the very same day that I got a call from Joel Silver's office – the Joel Silver, doing a Shane Black script and with Robert Downey Jr. and Val Kilmer – I'm over at Warner Bros. at the same lot and the producers of *The Gilmore Girls* are wanted me to read alongside ten other actors for one scene (*laughs*). Now that is a fine little television show but I thought, "How odd, Joel Silver – who is about 15 feet from here – wants me to be in a big movie – and the producers of *The Gilmore Girls* want me to audition alongside another ten actors." It is all humbling but there you go – that is the nature of the business.

You wrote, directed and starred in the 2009 thriller *Donna on Demand*. Can you tell us about this movie?

Yeah, thanks for asking - that was a very cool and very dark thriller. It is born out of that whole "old red paper clip" thing that happened – I don't know if you followed that but this kid out in Montreal called Kyle MacDonald has this web site called oneredpaperclip.com. Basically, he traded a red paper clip all the way up to a house. He traded the paper clip for a door knob, a door knob for a pen and so on and so on and I had heard about this on the radio. This kid was getting millions of hits on his web site and people were speaking about it and it sounded really cool. So I called him up, I wanted to get involved, and – long story short – he found out that I have the world's largest snow globe collection, I have 7000 of them, and he had a guy trade a KISS snow globe for a day with Alice Cooper. He calls me up and says, "Would you like a KISS snow globe?" I said sure and we traded it for a role in the movie *Donna on Demand*. I took the snow globe, he got a speaking role in the movie and then someone from this little town in Saskatchewan called Kipling and said, "How about a house on Main Street for the movie role?" So this little town of 11,000 people gave Kyle his house, he traded the movie for it, I went to Kipling where he had his housewarming. So *Donna on Demand* is inspired by that and it turns into a dark little movie. Some crazy stuff happens to the characters and it all comes from that sort of trading... the movie deals with that.

Is there any more horror on the horizon?

Absolutely – in fact, I've been trying to get a movie off the ground called *The Clown* – it is a little like *The Dentist*, only it's this guy who has been a clown all his life and is driven to the point where he is travelling with this crummy little run down circus and it finally stops being funny. You can imagine what happens next (*laughs*).

TOWER OF EVIL

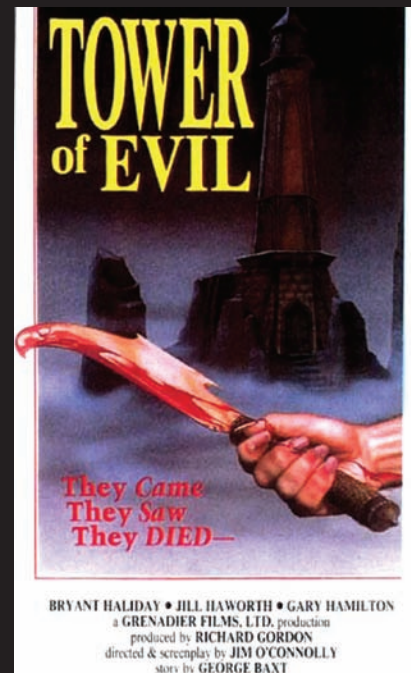
Independent producer Richard Gordon became involved with Joe Solomon's Fanfare Films in 1967, whilst occupied with the distribution side of the company's *Hell's Angels on Wheels*. Several years later, Gordon suggested to Solomon that they should make a film together in England. When Solomon agreed, Gordon set out to find a suitable property.

Amicus supremo Max J. Rosenberg introduced Gordon to American screenwriter and novelist George Baxt, who had penned Rosenberg's initial horror movie *City of the Dead* (1959). Baxt had written several further British horror films of variable quality; the grimly superior *Circus of Horrors* (1959), the smart witchcraft thriller *Night of the Eagle* (1961) and Hammer's enjoyably daft *Shadow of the Cat* (1960). Baxt suggested a story set on a deserted lighthouse island and agreed to prepare a story outline on spec. Both Joe Solomon and Richard Gordon liked this outline and Gordon contracted Baxt to write the screenplay in October 1970. Six months later, Richard Gordon was busy in London with preproduction. Financing was shared primarily between Fanfare and Grenadier Films Ltd., a company set up by Richard Gordon for the project, though, in return for certain distribution rights, a few continental European backers also invested in the production. The film was budgeted at approximately half a million dollars. To direct, Gordon had signed Jim O'Connolly, whose previous work included writing both *The Night Caller* (1965) and *Crooks and Coronets* (1969), as well as also directing the latter. As a director his work was mixed, encompassing the feature-length TV episode *Vendetta For The Saint* (1967) and the dire Joan Crawford quickie *Berserk* (1967).

A problem occurred, however, when neither Richard Gordon nor Joe Solomon were happy with Baxt's final screenplay. When Jim O'Connolly asked Gordon if he could work on the script, Gordon agreed, and O'Connolly quickly turned in an entirely new screenplay based on George Baxt's original outline, which Gordon describes as "excellent". Unfortunately, before Gordon could tell Baxt that he was going with O'Connolly's script, the word leaked out and an irate Baxt has not spoken to Richard Gordon since. With studio space booked at Shepperton for 30 days to commence in September 1971, Richard Gordon began casting. Though both Gordon and Solomon agreed that a Hollywood star was surplus to requirements, Gordon was keen to include Bryant Haliday, who had starred in three of Gordon's earlier horror films - *Devil Doll* (1961), *The Curse of Simba* (1961) and *The Projected Man* (1965) - and who Richard Gordon felt had a following in Europe. Solomon had previously experienced a great success with the distribution of *Devil Doll* in the USA, and he too favoured Haliday. Though Haliday was theoretically committed to

Jonathan
Sothcott travels
to Snape Island
to report on
the birth of the
first ever British
slasher film...





the film from the outset, union problems forced Gordon to keep Lee Patterson on standby, as Gordon explains: "I had Lee Patterson on hold for the role in case Haliday had not been able to obtain a labour permit and the consent of the ACTT as he was American and, at that time, residing in France. Assisted by John Pellatt, my associate producer, I had to fight with the Ministry of Labour for the permit and threatened to cancel the production, putting the entire English crew out of work, if they would not overrule the ACTT's veto on Haliday." Perhaps unsurprisingly, the ACTT backed down. Casting director Rose Tobias Shaw put forward Robin Askwith, fresh from Pete Walker's realistic sex racket expose *Cool it Carol* (1970), while Gordon himself selected twenty five year old Jill Haworth (born Valerie Jill Haworth), whose previous horror films included *It* (1966) and *The Haunted House of Horror* (1969). Askwith, whose other work included parts in Lindsay Anderson's *If...* (1969) and Pasolini's *The Canterbury Tales* recalls his surprise when Richard Gordon "told me that I'd never mentioned *Cool It Carol* when I was interviewed and asked me why. I thought Americans would be more impressed by the likes of Lindsay Anderson and Pasolini but I was wrong, Richard Gordon had loved *Cool it Carol*

and I'm sure that is why I was cast." Haworth had made quite an impact both on Broadway, where she created the role of Sally Bowles in the original run of *Cabaret*, and in Otto Preminger's *Exodus* (1960). Gary Hamilton, a young American actor based in London, had played a leading role in the West End production of *Hair* and made his film debut in *Tower of Evil*. Perhaps not surprisingly, given his horribly leaden performance, *Tower of Evil* remains Hamilton's only big screen credit. Rose Tobias Shaw also nominated Mark Edwards, who had recently completed his part in *Blood From The Mummy's Tomb*. Sir James Carreras screened a rough cut of the film for Richard Gordon, to enable him to see Edwards' work on the screen, and as a result he too was recruited.

Interestingly, Gordon also considered another Hammer player, Shane Briant, for the role, though rightly opted for Edwards. Crusty old hams George Coulouris and Dennis Price, together with the reliable Jack Watson rounded out the male cast, while Anna Palk, a veteran of British exploitation fare, having appeared in such curious films as *The Skull* (1965), *The Frozen Dead* (1965) and Tony Tenser's *Mini Weekend* (1967), took the second female lead.

By the time production commenced on Monday, the 13th of September, Hammer were well into shooting *Vampire Circus*, based on a story outline by George Baxt. 69-year-old Director of Photography Desmond Dickinson had the distinction of shooting *Lloyd of the CID* (1931), the only serial ever made in England. After his feature film debut, *Such Is The Law* (1930), he lensed such distinguished productions as *Hamlet* (1947) and *Meet Mr. Lucifer* (1953), before becoming a stalwart of British exploitation films; an area in which he photographed such diverse features as *Horrors of the Black Museum* (1958), *Mary Had A Little* (1961), *A Study In Terror* (1965) and *Baby Love* (1968). After returning from Greece, where he had shot Robert Hartford Davis' bizarre *Incense For The Damned* (1969), Dickinson began a run of British horror

films, including *Trog* (1969), *The Beast In The Cellar* and *Burke & Hare*. Dickinson's most recent assignment had been AIP's *Whoever Slew Auntie Roo?*, and both he and John Pellatt (whom Gordon describes as AIP's "very experienced Production Manager") went straight into *Tower of Evil*.

Adjacent to the *Tower of Evil* sets, Sir Carol Reed was shooting *The Public Eye* with Mia Farrow, whom, Richard Gordon recalls, "became a frequent visitor to our sets."

The production was generally a smooth one, though Anna Palk balked at her (admittedly rather graphic) bedroom scene, causing Richard Gordon numerous problems, as Robin Askwith recalls; "I remember she turned up to do her nude scenes with her nipples concealed by elastoplasts and this pissed Jim and Richard off. Particularly when she refused to take them off!"

When filming wrapped six weeks later, another problem arose: the BBFC were unhappy with the film's gratuitous cocktail of sex and blood and demanded a number of cuts. Antony Balch, with whom Richard Gordon had made *Bizarre* (1969), assisted Gordon in his negotiations with BBFC head Stephen Murphy, and the problems were eventually resolved. Richard Gordon interested EMI's Nat Cohen (whose Anglo Amalgamated distribution company Gordon had represented in America since the mid-fifties) in the film's British rights, and after Gordon screened the film, Cohen quickly inked a deal to distribute it. Following a trade show at Metro House on the 12th of October, 1972, *Tower of Evil* was released in Britain as the 'A' feature on a double bill with Hammer's *Demons of the Mind* on the 5th of November, to what Richard Gordon describes as "reasonable" returns - £1,479 in its first week at the ABC Edgware road. Rating *Demons of the Mind* as "one of Hammer's



lesser pictures," Gordon feels the film would have turned a healthier profit with a different co-feature, preferably an American one, as the two British films had to split the Eady money. Whatever their varying artistic merits, it is clear that the package was mismatched to say the least, but EMI had no other horror films awaiting release and were eager to clear *Demons of the Mind* from their backlog. Richard Gordon, though, was surprised when he was presented with an unsolicited (and unintentional) reaction to his film from one of the cast of *Demons of the Mind*: "When I went to see the show at the ABC off Edgware Road, someone sat behind me giggling through most of *Tower of Evil* and when the lights went up and I turned round, it was Shane Briant!" Ever the diplomat, Gordon decided not to introduce himself!

Writing in the BFI's *Monthly Film Bulletin*, David McGillivray bemoaned the film's unoriginal premise: "Predictable, youth-orientated horror of the 'I thought I heard something' school." *Kine Weekly* though were quick to give credit where due, praising the picture as "A most ingeniously constructed film which spreads its shocks, horrors, teases and red-herrings not only evenly but generously over its entire length."

In June 1974, EMI reissued the film

on a double bill with Hammer's *The Devil Rides Out* (1968) and the package took a respectable £2,236 at the New Victoria. When the rights reverted to Richard Gordon, he arranged for the film to be re-released by Brent Walker as support to *Death Race 2000* (1975), and received a "substantially" larger return from the reissue. In America, Fanfare encountered their own censorship problems when the MPAA requested numerous cuts before granting the film the requisite 'R' certificate. Fanfare licenced the film to AIP, who released it in 1972 under the Fanfare-imposed (and rather old fashioned) title of *Horror On Snake Island* to largely negative reviews, notably in *Variety*, which suggested the story was "contrived and confusing."

Fanfare later reissued the film under its original title, supported by an edited version of Gordon's *Bizarre* (1969) entitled *Tales of the Bizarre*. The American rights reverted to Richard Gordon in the early eighties, who arranged a further re-release of the film, this time with Sam Sherman of Independent International Pictures, under the title *Beyond The Fog* in an attempt to cash-in on John Carpenter's *The Fog* (1980). From the unconvincing model-shot with which it opens to the predictable climatic conflagration, *Tower*

of *Evil* is hokey British horror at its finest. Once we have witnessed the demise of three of the four randy hippies, the token sex and nudity seems out of the way, until the delightfully caustic Anna Palk intimates that the wife swapping archaeologists are just as sex-mad (it is of course possible, that they are all long range victims of silly fertility God Baal's influence) and wastes little time in dismissing her numerous extramarital affairs with a salacious: "What's a girl to do? Masturbation is so boring!"

The hippy couples, all sporting preposterous cod-American accents ("We have sound, food and some great grass - this place is really far out!" enthuses a hairy Robin Askwith in his unfortunate 'Gee-Whizz' brogue) are thankfully despatched quickly, though they reappear in various flashbacks, generally at least partially naked.

Bryant Haliday convinces in the rather contrived role of a tough American detective, and Anna Palk gives a curiously endearing performance (at odds with the unnervingly clinical style in which her sex scene is filmed, which is quite remarkable for the period), but it is Mark Edwards who effortlessly takes the acting honours, giving a superbly restrained performance and, despite wearing a particularly dubious selection of huge-lapelled suits and safari jackets, manages to soldier through the film with his credibility intact. Jill Haworth, the only actress besides the ubiquitous Marianne Stone who manages to keep her clothes on, is slightly less impressive, though the poorly written part can shoulder the brunt of the blame for this, as it gives her little to do.

The film's greatest novelty, however, is undoubtedly its effective double climax: a first for a British horror film, although it is lamentable that the gibbering 'monster' (in fact a lank-haired, dungaree-clad loony lighthouse keeper), played by Frederic Abbot, should look quite so like *Tigon's Beast in the Cellar*; indeed, it is fascinating that the second 'monster', the first's similarly gibbering son (played by Mark McBride) should also bear a striking resemblance to the devil as seen in *Tigon's Satan's Skin*. *Tower of Evil's* many sins, ranging from trite dialogue and insidious fashions to several languid performances and pitiful back projection, are all balanced by its many virtues, notably the effective hypnosis scenes, likably libido-driven scientists, Anna Palk's agreeably tight trousers, gruesomely innovative murders and the particularly memorable image of a naked Candace Glendenning; blood spattered and knife wielding, running frantically through the fog, only to be knocked unconscious by an understandably startled Jack Watson.

Though ostensibly little more than an enjoyable mixture of gratuitous nudity and novel carnage, *Tower of Evil* is none the worse for that, and in retrospect can be seen as a neat precursor to the likes of *Friday the 13th*, and as such the first British slasher movie proper.

CAPTAIN AMERICA



REB BROWN AS
CAPTAIN AMERICAN

REMEMBER THE DAYS WHEN GRAPHIC NOVELS WERE CALLED COMIC BOOKS AND THE HEROES WEREN'T TORMENTED SOULS STRUGGLING WITH THE PROSPECT OF HAVING TO WEAR THEIR KNICKERS ON THE OUTSIDE TO WORK?

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In Captain America II: Death Too Soon, Brown's Steve Rogers takes on an evil gang of muggers and a terrorist, played by none other than legendary horror star Christopher Lee, who has created a chemical that accelerates aging. In a suitably macabre touch, Lee feels the full force of the chemical in the final scenes!

101 also release the 1990 feature film of Captain America which stars Matt Salinger in the title role. Interestingly, he's the son of the reclusive J.D. Salinger, author of "Catcher in the Rye". This exciting flick pits Cap against his most famous nemesis, The Red Skull, played by TV's Castle star Scott Paulin. We learn from this movie that The Red Skull had a hand in JFK's assassination - someone tell Oliver Stone! Here we first meet Captain America in the war years, where he's captured by the Skull and tied to a missile pointed at the White House. Luckily Cap manages to thwart old tomato face's dastardly scheme but he ends up being blasted over to the Arctic and frozen like a human lollipop in a block of ice.

Fast forward a few decades and Cap thaws out, looking not a jot older. The world has changed but The Red Skull is still out to dominate it, and it's up to our patriotic hero to kick his arse red white and blue!



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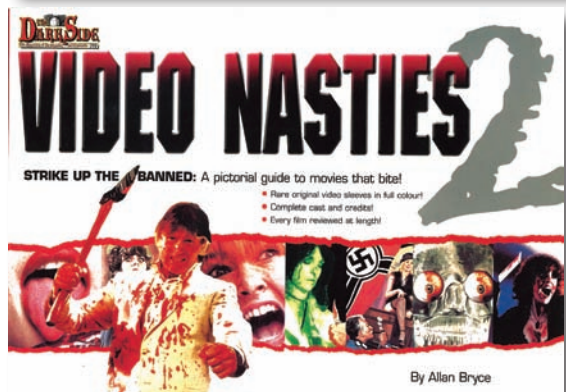
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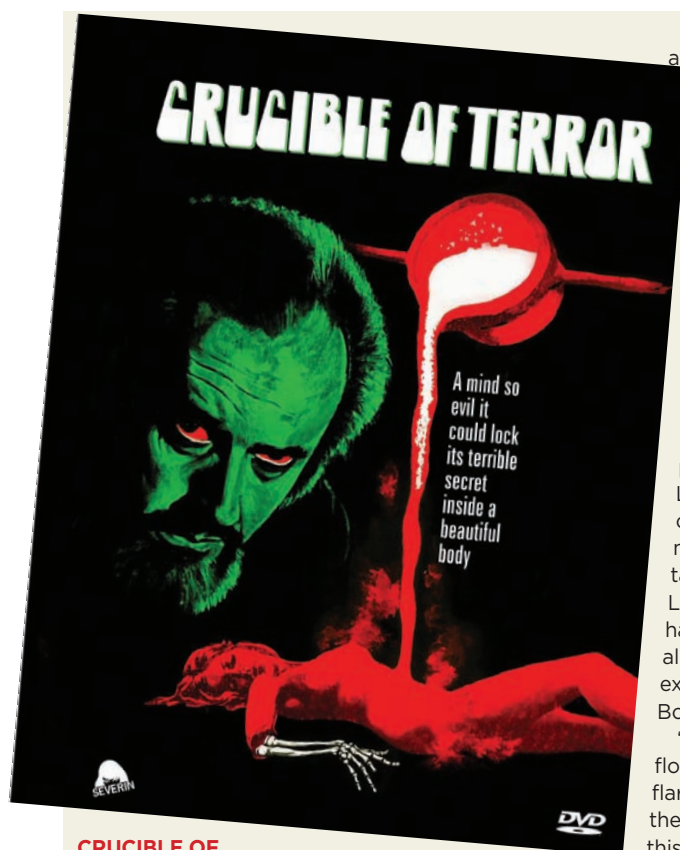
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DVD

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The latest genre-related DVD and Blu-ray releases reviewed by the redoubtable **James Kloda** and our esteemed editor **Allan Bryce**



CRUCIBLE OF TERROR (1971) DVD

Out Now. 2entertain. Certificate: 18. Heady thrills from 1971 with former Radio One disc jockey Mike Raven handing in his microphone to turn distinctly nasty - as a mad sculptor who murders his female models and covers their corpses with molten metal.

Because he was so horrible as a DJ, and didn't want to join Jimmy Savile's gang, the gaunt and bearded Raven naturally assumed he was wasted at the BBC scaring the secretaries and so he decided he would try to crack it as a horror star instead. And I suppose he might indeed have made it into the hallowed company of Lee and Cushing had it not been for his awful lisp that at moments of high drama made him come across like a sinister and very butch version of *Just William's* Violet Elizabeth Bott. The fact that he couldn't act to save his life was another drawback.

Anyway, you can judge his talents for yourself in this bargain basement remake of *The House of Wax* that casts him as the reclusive Victor Clare, an odd character who lives in

a remote Cornish village. Every so often he nips out to murder some of the local talent and knocks up a statue around their bones.

Clare's bulging-eyed, rubber-lipped son (played like a warped *Thunderbird* puppet by Ronald Lacey) pinches one of his dad's masterpieces and takes it down to London where he has no trouble at all flogging it to ex-*Likely Lad* James Bolam.

"I'll bet my flowered shirt and flared trousers that there's more where this came from," thinks the astute

Bolam and persuades the unnatural Mr. Lacey to let him and his snooty girlfriend (Mary Maude) visit Victor for the weekend. Of course, when they get down there, some very strange things start to happen.

Lacey keeps forgetting his lines until someone bashes him over the head with a brick - a good memory jogger, that. And the demented Raven starts lisping like crazy as he gets his kiln all fired up over the bored Ms. Maude. "I'd like to immortalise you in bronze," he says, which is 70s speak for, "Is a shag out of the question?"

Bolam looks bemused by the whole affair and spends a great deal of time in a local phone box trying to contact the police, the AA or his agent, who is sure to get a ticking off over this gig. At the time of its release one astute critic noted: "If there has been a combination of limper performances, more stilted direction or more risible dialogue purporting to produce suspense and thrills, I cannot offhand recall its title."

Says it all, really, so this is thoroughly recommended. **AB.**

RAILROADED! (1947) DVD

Out Now. Blue Dolphin.

Certificate: PG.

To railroad is to push something through hastily without allowing for proper consideration or possible questioning, be it a political bill or scapegoat. It expedites a machination to power full steam ahead, fuelled by deceit and duplicity: woe betide that which is strapped to it. Steve Ryan is the victim here, framed

for a hold-up on a back-room bookies masquerading as a beauty salon. The motive? Ryan beat up one of the perpetrators for making inappropriate advances on his sister Rosie, and his colleague Duke Martins will stop at nothing to make the story stick. The complication? A cop was killed: the diligent Ferguson is assigned to the case, childhood neighbour to the Ryan family, to ensure justice is swift. *Railroaded* from both sides of the law, will the suspect be shunted indiscriminately to the gas chamber before the truth comes out? Part of a new range of titles from Blue Dolphin fittingly called *Film Noir: America's Dark Side*, this is a cynical, efficient B picture. With the exception of the family at its centre, everyone is flawed and unpleasant: a racketeer who quotes misogynist epigrams from Oscar Wilde, Duke's alcoholic floozy, the police chief who refuses verdict except death sentence. The closest people get to trusting each other is mere mutual acceptance; a forensic expert spits that man is worse than vermin in turning on their own kind, because they're supposed to possess conscience. What unites the characters, both innocent and guilty, is hatred of the police, and Ferguson is hardly sympathetic, a stickler for whom gut feelings are to be dismissed until cold evidence proves them: when he protests to Rosie that he's 'just doing his job', she scorns, "Men are so smug about their duty." No difference for Duke, taking sly pleasure as he spreads and smooths the blanket of lies further to protect himself and the illegal operation he works for: played scratchily by John Ireland, he is a ghoul without compunction.

Directed by Anthony Mann, who, in a series of violent Westerns (*The Naked Spur*, *Bend Of The River*), harnessed the traumatised psyche of James Stewart - after he fought in the war - to terrifying effect, this is photographed in thick darkness with minimal lighting, sometimes flat-on, denying its subject three-dimensional depth: an unfair representation of their character. *Railroaded*. Low-key and unsentimental, this is a welcome invitation to explore the underbelly of American noir. Andre de Toth's *Dark Waters* is due for release next: stay tuned to *The Dark Side*...

Extras: None. **JK.**





LOOPER (2012) DVD/BLU-RAY

Out Now. Entertainment One. Certificate: 15.

With its images of blunderbuss-wielding hitmen, mid-Western cornfields, futuristic hover vehicles and demonically possessed children, *Looper* is a mishmash of iconography popularised by cinema. "Goddamn 20th century affectations", as one character puts it, it is ironically these mannerisms that make the film such a sharp addition to the time travel genre, at once looking into history to make its alternative reality plausible and using its references suggestively.

The 'present-day' is a wasteland of graffiti, half-junked cars and upturned trash cans. Time travel has not yet been invented and is illegal in the future. Violent crime unites the two parallel dimensions, but, with bodies increasingly difficult to get rid of in the hereafter, they are pinged back to the now to be disposed of efficiently by assassins known as 'loopers'. Employees handsomely paid and protected by a syndicate led by Abe (played by Jeff Daniels with breezy malice), the contract's small print is written in blood: the loose end will eventually have to be tied up by a hatchet job on their older self: once complete, the looper is retired with a golden pension to enjoy a further thirty years before they're sent back for final retirement. The day comes for Joe (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) to close his loop and he is faced with Bruce Willis. Joe Snr. overpowers his junior and they both become fugitives with a mission: Willis to find and terminate a child that will grow up to be the Rainmaker, a psychotically powerful super-criminal he personally holds responsible for the death of his wife; Gordon-Levitt to protect Sarah (Emily Blunt) and her nephew Sid, prime suspect for prophet of doom, and finish the job of self-obliteration.

Time travel is a nonsensical minefield, the laws of cause and effect so fragile that the minute one starts rationalising the narrative it begins to endlessly collapse into itself. Director Rian Johnson, who, with his debut *Brick*, distinctively reinvented the world of film noir to a high school, self-consciously sidesteps this by giving it scant attention. No silly machines and psychedelic effects to provide distraction (Gordon-Levitt's prosthetic nose is sufficient): the physical means is signified by the ticking of an antique pocket watch and the swirl of cream in coffee- time and cosmos, it's all symbolic anyways. Abe complains that "time travel shit fries your brain like an egg" and Willis, confronting his other ego in a diner, simply states that once they start talking about it, they'll be there all day (certainly rings true if anyone has had the misfortune to be in a room with fans of *Donnie Darko*). Skip to the action. Wisely.

And *Looper* certainly delivers, the psychic action of Sid all thunderous slow motion and visceral effects (wind machines, violently palpitating flesh), straight out of horror cinema. As is a fantastically gruesome manner of punishment, an escaped looper gradually falling apart as his younger self is tortured and amputated upon. Johnson's strength is in finding tangible ways to make the conceptual stick. That diner scene powers the film, Willis given metaphysical opportunity to bitterly reflect on youthful mistake: "I can remember what you do after you do it. And it hurts." And Gordon-Levitt defies advice like a sullen teen, angry at being told what he will do with his life, determined not to grow up like his senior. But, like an estranged father and son, they cannot help but influence each other: Willis's confused anguish when he struggles to get the first sight of Sarah out of his head is palpable, wanting to believe that Junior's spite is the motivation to keep him from falling in love with his future Oriental bride, but tacitly acknowledging that it could be his interference with his own destiny that might prevent this. But blame is



TERRORVISION/THE VIDEO DEAD (1986 and 1988) DVD and Blu-ray

Out Now.

Shout! Factory - www.movietyme.com

Certificate: N/A.

Eating cheese late at night can give you bad dreams, apparently. I wonder if the same is true watching 80s cheese on Blu-ray? To test the theory I sat down with some plain crackers, lightly buttered, to return to the heady days when it was acceptable to wear leg warmers, a sweater and a miniskirt all at the

same time. My mum advised against it at the time but I just didn't care.

TerrorVision is the better of the two movies here, a crude but entertaining horror comedy from the Charles Band Empire Movies stable. Obviously inspired by a well-known episode of *The Outer Limits*, it stars Gerrit Graham as a dopey do-it-yourself fan who sets up an enormous satellite dish on his house and accidentally sucks in a space monster, which comes out of his TV and causes havoc.

The film is served up with all the subtle comic flair of a knee in the nuts but at least the monsters are a hoot and the characters just crazy enough to engage our interest. Graham and his slinky wife Mary Woronov are would-be swingers who invite another randy couple round for some *Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice*-type fun. Things go a little pear-shaped in the bedroom though when the Greek male guest (a hilarious turn by smooth Argentinian *Dallas* actor Alejandro Rey) asks Mary, "Does your husband take it like a man?"

Extras include a really good little documentary in which the majority of the surviving cast and crew members - including director Ted Nicolaou and cult favourite Mary Woronov - recall the movie with enthusiasm. There's also a lively audio commentary from Nicolaou, star Diane Franklin and actor Jon Gries.

The Video Dead is a rather tacky zombie flick from 1988, which has a television, set being delivered to the house of a writer. That night it switches itself on and runs an old black and white horror film called *Zombie Blood Nightmare*, in which the dead rise up out of their graves and shamle through the woods to attack the living. Then smoke starts coming out of the telly and several zombies emerge from the set to kill the writer. That's what happens when you don't pull the plug out of the wall at night, kiddies.

The zombies later menace new occupants Roxanna Augeson and Rocky Duvall, teenagers whose parents haven't arrived yet, and it's up to the enterprising Augeson to find a way to return them to the ghoulish goggle-box before they slaughter the whole neighbourhood.

While rather slow moving with performances wooden enough to have termites salivating, this is nevertheless a decent enough effort, with effective low budget gore and some welcome dark humour. It also adds some interesting new bits of zombie lore, like the living dead do not like mirrors because they hate looking at themselves, and they will only attack those who show fear.

Extras on *The Video Dead* include two commentaries, one by writer/producer/director Robert Scott, editor Bob Sarles and makeup effects creator Dale Hale Jr, another from actors Roxanne Augesen and Rocky Duvall, production manager Jacques Thelemaque and makeup assistant Patrick Denver. Then *Pre-Recorded* is a ten-minute interview with Hale and Denver, who discuss the special effect makeup and zombie creations used in the film. Outtakes, a stills and poster gallery and a trailer round out the package.

Picturewise *TerrorVision* looks by far the best, bright and colourful with decent image detail, though it is a tad soft and grainy from time to time. *The Video Dead* was shot on 16mm and blown up, but it looks decent enough here, albeit grainy and lacking in strong colours.

Some may say these straight-to-video wonders deserve a Blu-ray release like Gary Glitter deserves a comeback tour but here they are anyway, so get used to it. And don't have nightmares. **AB.**



HOLY MOTORS (2012) DVD/BLU-RAY

Out Now. Artificial Eye. Certificate: 18.

An insult is shouted at the careless driver of a limousine: "Ectoplasm on wheels!" This is the closest phrase that can be used to sum up Leos Carax's *Holy Motors*, a quixotic, frenzied drive of exuberant surrealism. A batshit variation on the guardian angel narrative, that white limo drives around Paris to drop its passenger off at numerous appointments, where he will complete a task, for good or bad, in the story of someone else's life, before moving on to the next interaction.

The film follows 24 hours in the schedule of travelling ectoplasmic meddler Mr. Oscar (the chameleonic Denis Lavant). The back of his car is decked out as a dressing room, where Oscar carefully applies gruesome prosthetics and dons an array of costumes in preparation for each role: chauffeured by Céline (Edith Scob), she is both his firm secretary and sole confidante, concerned that her boss's busy agenda is causing exhaustion and loss of appetite, except for alcohol. Today, Oscar has, amongst others, become the following: bag lady, deranged vagrant hobbit called Monsieur Merde, tracksuited hitman, dying old man, concerned father. It is when his limo almost crashes into an identical car, causing Oscar to meet another existential interloper, an old flame (played strikingly by Kylie Minogue), that *Holy Motors* reveals its possible scheme: life is a network of role-play, a fluid series of fleeting encounters in an illusory pageant. In short, reality is bullshit, but has the rhythm and allure of the movies.

Leos Carax, his first film in thirteen years after the equally remarkable *Pola X*, has thrown up a lurid, psycho-erotic masquerade, both a celebration of cinema and a distress call. The demented indulgence of Gothic horror, futuristic visions of science fiction, irrationally beautiful violence of the crime thriller, right through to the tender intimacy of melodrama: all exultant fireworks popping in the celluloid of *Holy Motors*. When Minogue belts out a mournful song in the deluded grandeur of a disintegrating department store, one cannot but think of Catherine Deneuve in the films of Jacques Demy, a director who was also flamboyant in his love for the medium.

Carax, however, is also explicitly concerned for his art. Opening with a full auditorium of people silently watching unseen images, the audience in general is whom he is fearful for. Oscar plays a motion-capture artist and practices acrobatics in beguiling slow motion, the markers on his suit glowing ethereally under the ultraviolet light of the studio. He is joined by a female and they writhe harmoniously together, a bizarre but highly sensual mobile constellation in their lovemaking act: the camera pans across to show the resultant CG image, two serpentine dragons copulating, not nearly as exquisite as the ballet performed by their creators. "Men don't want visible machines any more," complains one of the limos later on (yes, they talk!), physical beauty all too often displaced by digital rendering, echoing Oscar's nostalgia for the old, bulky cameras now replaced by lightweight technology. [It should be noted that Oscar is the director's middle name.]

What is beauty? Carax seems to be asking. A radiant image of Eva Mendes dressed as the Madonna, soothing a naked Monsieur Merde with a lullaby, his head on her lap, sporting an irrepressible hard-on. A palpable reaction to beauty combined with the placating effect of it. When Oscar's enigmatic boss (played by the venerable Michel Piccoli), tells him that it's all in the eye of the beholder, the reply is, "And what if there is no more beholder?"

Holy Motors is a reveille to an audience in danger of losing their sight to fake effects and insipid formulae: ugliness. It is a phantasmagoric, dizzying display to remind us that motion pictures are a glorious ectoplasm of our collective dreams. (*Go and have a lie down now, James, Ed*). **JK.**



THE FALLOW FIELD (2009) DVD

Out Now.

Monster

Pictures.

Certificate:

15.

Backwoods, isolated; scythes, reaping; scarecrows, crucified: farms and

agriculture provide fertile ground for the macabre. From *Children Of The Corn*'s maize-dwelling demon who coaxes the young to sacrifice their elders for successful harvest, to the religious nuts and Gothic gloom of a mid-Western ranch in Wes Craven's delirious barnyard horror *Deadly Blessing* (also out on Blu-Ray this month from Arrow), there's a significant crop of films out there to make one get cold feet the minute anyone mentions wellies. This could certainly apply to Matthew Sandler, the protagonist at the centre of *The Fallow Field*, who has a habit of waking up, barefoot, in the morning dew of the English countryside, with no recollection of how he got there.

Matt's most recent fugue has had him reported missing for seven days: strained by his unaccountability for his actions, he is dumped by both wife and mistress. Drawn to a secluded estate by a sense of déjà vu, Matt encounters the gruff owner Calham, who insists that he stay for a cuppa before slitting his throat. That's rustic hospitality for you. But Calham has a certain plot on his land that provides unique cultivation: it brings to life that which is buried in its soil. Upon waking from the dead, the outsider is forced to become the farmer's hired hand, assisting him with finding suitable produce that will yield to Calham's homicidal impulses before sending them back to market, with no memory of their part in the field's supernatural crop cycle.

The Fallow Field is a curious mixture, its original, mysterious premise hampered by unnecessary throwbacks to 70s grindhouse, with boiler suits, torture-tooled 'workshop' and whiny captive that snivels incessantly for their life. Chief amongst these tropes is Henry, a maniacally rabid zombie with head like blighted root vegetable: the idea that those who are planted for too long become spoiled is intriguing, but undeveloped, the figure reduced to shock tactic, whilst providing tired character motivation for Calham- Henry is kept alive because he's his own flesh and blood even though the inevitable consequence can be seen a country mile off. Far more interesting is the strange relationship between the two protagonists, Calham holding Matt prisoner as he's the only one who might understand what he does, the younger man having repeatedly, and unconsciously, returned to the farmstead to undergo the same ritual. A mutual, almost subliminal, need for the other, an ambiguous bond in blood.

This is carried over into the visual design of the film, Calham standing over Matt and blocking the light, his face becoming a shadowy blank reminding us of how little we know of him: as Matt chides his tormenter for perpetuating this cyclical killing game, Calham is dimly lit from overhead, eyes glistening with sorrow, penitent but somehow doomed. The mournful, menacing atmosphere is complemented by Nick Kindon's landscape photography, glistening with eerie enchantment, and the haunted ambience of the soundtrack, moody electronics feeding into the unrelenting chug of the farm's generator.

Director Leigh Dovey's film may occasionally fall fallow in its over-reliance on staple ingredients, but there is enough of a fertile germ in its central conceit to reap substantial reward. Enough that you won't want consequent mention of Wellington boots.

Extras: Making of, extensive; Commentary by Dovey and producer Colin Arnold, a little self-appreciative, but good on production detail. **JK.**



FROM BEYOND (1986) BLU-RAY

Out Now. Second Sight.

Certificate: 18.

As we all know, horror films are good for you. Watching scary movies releases serotonin, increasing brain activity and keeping the mind alert. Stimuli pertaining to threat pass through the hypothalamus and arouse the adrenal gland, releasing adrenaline and opiates into the bloodstream to relax us, strengthening our immune system for a while.

Not just a pretty face, eh?

From Beyond deals with the stimulation of a different gland, the pineal, whilst tickling the one nearest our kidneys enough to ensure a doctor's recommendation.

Dr. Pretorius (Ted Sorel) believes the pineal gland, located at the base of the skull, to be a dormant sensory organ, a 'third eye'. Assisted by Crawford Tillinghast (Jeffrey Combs), he experiments with a device called the Resonator, straight out of Frankenstein's laboratory, which produces vibrations to wake the sixth sense from its comfy nod next to the pituitary.

And what visions are revealed, translucent worms and squid-like creatures floating around humankind, Pretorius literally losing his head to their thrall.

Having since been arrested for murder and placed in a psychiatric institution, Crawford is taken under the care of Dr. Katherine McMichaels (Barbara Crampton), who believes his spiel and demands to recreate the procedure.

But firing up the Resonator allows Pretorius access to the world of the flesh, his transcendence into a parallel universe having turned him into amorphous, horny predator.

Based on a H. P. Lovecraft short story, director Stuart Gordon and regular collaborator Dennis Paoli make six pages go a long way. To counteract the science fiction and metaphysical ideas (McMichaels believes that schizophrenia is caused by over-stimulation of the pineal, madness as a super-sensory state of being), a good smattering of humour adds extra dimension.

Combs as the timid man-child



complements the excessive gore with his oddball palpitations, and Ken Foree as Bubba Brownlee, a wise-cracking cop sent to keep an eye on doctor and patient, brings his easy aloofness to the proceedings: when Crawford points out where Pretorius had his head swallowed, Bubba retorts that "all this talk of eating's making me hungry."

But it is the imaginative effects that happily push the film beyond boundaries of taste. The pineal gland is responsible for regulating sexual development: when damaged, the growth of reproductive organs is accelerated.

So alongside the giant worm that materialises in the cellar, Pretorius Mark II, lit from the shocking pink of the Resonator as if at a strip joint, is a libidinous mass of twisted flesh fused into muscle, fingers elongating for a grope, tendrils snaking from his crotch and enlarging as they approach potential victims: at one point, he is brilliantly conceived as a giant mouth on legs, pining for a kiss from McMichaels.

From Beyond is vivid and violent stimulation, with a calming release of

vaudeville. It should prove to be very good for you depending on what gland it awakens.

Extras: Stacks. Commentary with Gordon, Crampton, Combs and producer Brian Yuzna reminiscing about shooting in Italy, the camaraderie between them endearing; Separate interviews with Crampton, Paoli and composer Richard Band, all insightful about their contributions;

We also get two interviews with Gordon, one as a public Q & A, that could have been condensed to one- no real matter, as he is an engaging presence, especially when relating how his mother had to wash her hands after seeing the film.

Add to this a superb FX featurette, which will teach you about importing slime to Italy; an illuminating piece on the censorship of the original cut and how the lost footage was found and reinstated; Storyboard to film comparison. With vibrant picture quality, one should go above and beyond to add this to the collection. (*Ed note - the new US Blu-ray edition is also available from www.movietyme.com*) **JK.**

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LA POISON (1951) DVD/BLU-RAY**Out Now. Eureka! Certificate: 12**

"Marriage is not a word: it is a sentence."

Thus spake Oscar Wilde: much crime fiction has revelled in showing various ways of ending that life term. Spousal offing has its benefits, be it for insurance cash-in (*Fargo*, *Double Indemnity*) or as one-upmanship for cuckoldry (*Dial M For Murder*). *The War Of The Roses* went one further, with divorce played out as jet-black farce, a violent, grotesque battle of the sexes. But, almost forty years prior to that, Wilde's pithy epithet surely provided the tartest of bases to Sacha Guitry's wonderfully acid concoction *La Poison*.

The premise is simple. In the rural town of Remonville, Paul Braconnier (Michel Simon) hates his wife, a dumpy screechbag who endlessly knocks bottles of wine down her gullet (gamely played by Germaine Reuver), and wishes her dead: the feeling is mutual, scornful dinners accompanied by radio broadcast to relieve the need to speak to one another, a knife sticking temptingly out of a loaf of bread. She buys a hefty dose of rat poison, he visits Aubanel, a lawyer famous for acquitting the guiltiest of murderers, to get ideas on how to commit the perfect crime. Who will strike first and, most importantly, will the resultant scandal bring prosperity to the village?

Shot in ironically bright monochrome, *La Poison* is laced with toxic wit and cynicism

so acrid it smokes.

The vow of marriage is accepted as a contest to see who can achieve the successful destruction of the other first and emerge as winner: it is the pesky manners of society that want to condemn the killer, not welcome his or her hard-fought-for endeavours. As such, Guitry's film holds the Church and State in wry contempt, the local vicar forced to admit that the most common confession is that of cancerous thoughts toward one's beloved, Braconnier riotously indicting the middle-class culture of discreet affairs and convenient dissolution: "Peasants don't get divorced! They wait until the other one's dead to try to rebuild their lives," he bellows at a judge. And that is the wanton pleasure of this bitterly subversive, misanthropic comedy: the uncouth behaviour of the provinces (where, as is sardonically noted by Remonville's resident busybody, 30% of the population are impotent, the remainder constipated) twisting the polite mores and morals of metropolitan France into



anarchic knots. Guitry found his bilious alter-ego in the wonderful Simon-think Charles Laughton's Quasimodo suffused with Peter Sellers's droll insolence-, and he plays Braconnier as a heedless idiot savant: his flabby looks of disgust at his wife are glowingly hilarious; the buffoonish ease with which he tricks Aubanel into complicity, or harangues the chief justice in not thanking him for killing a known murderer, a bracingly disingenuous display of rhetoric. For Guitry, the

sentencing that begins with "I do" may at first be disheartening and tedious, but it goes on to inspire dastardly ingenuity, bringing out the best in his main character. Marriage is not a word: in *La Poison*, it is invitation to delicious murder.

Extras: Substantial French documentary on the self-styled auteur Guitry, discussing his fruitful working relationship with Simon but coming into its own when exploring the more controversial aspects of the artists (the director's alleged misogyny and Nazi collaboration, the actor's sado-masochistic attitude toward women); Typically thorough, well-designed booklet. **JK.**

THE KING OF PIGS (2011) DVD**Out Now. Terracotta. Certificate: 18.**

Ever since seeing *Battle Royale* when it was released, I have always been haunted by a smile. The grin flashed for cameras by the winner of the contest prior to the one that the film follows: a young girl, clutching a bloodstained doll, that leering rictus chillingly suggesting the lure of violence, innocence corrupted to smirking sadism. *The King Of Pigs* also warns of a smile, one that simpers to its tormentors, the mouth bowed to suffer weak subservience.

Kyung-min is a businessman heavy in debt, his wife having recently committed suicide. Jong-suk is a failed writer, angry at his girlfriend's blithe success. These shortcomings could stem from their schooldays, pulled into focus when Kyung-min contacts his old best buddy for the first time in a long while. He cannot shake the memory of Chul, their peer and eventual cohort who stood up to the vicious hierarchy in their all-boys academy, a boy who refused to smile. Chul was consequently expelled and committed an act of public suicide during assembly, in protest to the injustice of bullying. Fifteen years on, both adults are now compelled to remember this childhood friendship and how it has influenced them, for better or (most certainly) for worse.

This Korean anime is a noble attempt to address the disquieting politics of the playground. Kyung-min is an effeminate crybaby (his nickname), Jong-suk a sullen juvenile: both are confused, troubled and malleable. When Chul, in mod-rebel Parka,

individually intervenes in the intimidation of the boys, he has won them to his cause- to become a savage "monster" to avoid being a smiling "loser", a ritualistic slaughter of a cat their indoctrination. The tragic irony is that none of the boys can actually transcend their innate decency to become anything more than 'pigs', fodder to the older prefects that unconsciously rule the roost, but are nevertheless damaged by their flirtation with violence and its promise of dominion.

There is a lot of ponderous dialogue aligning school privilege (and therefore cruelty) with social standing, which often makes *The King Of Pigs* feel like earnest allegory. This is not helped by the decision to produce the film as animation, inevitably draining it of realism, with dream



sequences of the jeering dead feline and a classroom populated with milky-eyed hogs having more of the effect of moralising cartoon rather than the cautionary parable which it aspires too. Where the technique does work though is in the exaggeration of the protagonist's expressions, Chul's angular features creasing into ferocious chevrons as he metes out pure rage, the other boys' faces bulging grotesquely with shame and hurt as they're emasculated by the prefects.

Despite its heavy-handedness, director Yeon Sang-ho nevertheless builds a strangely disquieting momentum in the final act, as the two grown-ups finally confront the unresolved legacy of Chul's death. Both losers with failed relationships, their

most pained affliction is that they cannot talk about those schooldays with a smile: ruing a childhood without happiness or not surrendering with a simper? It is that ambiguity which haunts. **JK.**



THE SERVANT (1963) DVD/BLU-RAY

Out: 8th April. **StudioCanal.** **Certificate:** 15.

Released fifty years ago, *The Servant* is still one of the most terrifying depictions of an outsider subtly insinuating himself into the life of another, before laying that existence to hideous ruin. Crackling with menace, it is an electric storm of erotic tension, degenerate breakdown and sinister influence.

Hugo Barrett (Dirk Bogarde) is employed by 'man of leisure' Tony (James Fox, his screen debut) to run his house and tend to all needs. Barrett slyly alienates his employer's fiancée Susan (Wendy Craig) from her intended before bringing his sister Vera (Sarah Miles) under the roof as maid. Sashaying seductively and wearing teasingly short skirts, it is not long before Tony is caught in her spell. When he finds out that she is also sleeping with Barrett, everything begins to unravel and the boundaries of class, sexuality and sanity cascade over one another in a maelstrom of perversion. Directed by Joseph Losey, the first of three collaborations with screenwriter Harold Pinter, Barrett is initially presented as an ominous guardian angel. On his first encounter with Tony, he stands poised over the reclining figure: Barrett is dapper and speaks with urbane politeness, his new master scruffy and bleary after a few too many lunchtime drinks. This confusion of status continues as the servant is framed as the taller, more dominant presence, or reflected in a background mirror, a lurking ubiquity that cannot be dismissed.

Crucial to the incredibly precise mise-en-scène, aided supremely by Douglas Slocombe's opulently high-contrast photography, is the use of mirrors, particularly that of a concave one that creates a distorted, almost hallucinatory, perspective on the living room and its occupants: it captures a clinch between Tony and Vera as if a vignette, their interlinked hands clutching at a door jamb in the foreground disconnected and gauche compared to the styled fantasy behind; when Tony and Susan challenge Barrett about his improper use of master's bedroom, the confrontation between the two men smoulders in reflection between the couple, a mirage of tacit sexual threat. The film is both sultry with eroticism, a dripping tap increasing in rhythmic flow as Vera seduces Tony, and dank with it. The ambiguity of the central relationship festers throughout, Bogarde's suggestive effeminacy intimidating yet beguiling to the callow Fox: at one point Barrett's shadow is projected on the staircase wall smoking a post-coital cigarette - Tony can only cower from the physique but not escape it. This mounting tension never finds release, but strains the characters to increasingly depraved behaviour.

It is during the latter part of *The Servant*, with the two men locked together in the house, which has become a gloomy, slovenly prison, that the currents of dread break out into flurries of terror and humiliated despair, as Barrett preys on Tony in malicious games of hide and seek. "I'm a gentleman's gentleman and you're no gentleman," he taunts in a typically Pinter-esque line, Tony now a numb inebriate and in need of a master to walk him, as his former servant indulgently slumps into decadent ennui.

The usurpation moving to horrifying completion, *The Servant* dishes up more menace and genuine unease than most dime-a-dozen genre films. Give oneself up to its sinister influence.

Extras: Brand new interviews with the surviving cast; Discursive presentations by Pinter and Bogarde experts, the insights into the complexities of both personalities fascinating; Audio interview with Slocombe from last year, who goes into detail about the various shadow effects and difficulty in photographing the iconic mirror. However, it is the archive footage that is scintillating, with Losey discussing *The Servant* twice; *Tempo* programme on Pinter, the writer at his dry, equivocal best. Superbly restored, this *50th Anniversary Edition* is formidable testament to one of the best British films of the last century. **JK.**



SIGHTSEERS (2012) DVD/BLU-RAY

Out Now. **StudioCanal.** **Certificate:** 18.

"Show me your world, Chris!"

This exclamation begins the 'erotic odyssey' across Britain undertaken by the loving couple at the heart of *Sightseers*. Odysseus is an anorak-wearing ginger with a sociopathic disdain for pretty much everyone: his Athena is Tina, a sheltered mother's girl crushed with guilt at the accidental death by knitting needle of her beloved terrier. Their chariot a caravan, the kinky saga will involve homespun crotchless knickers, pasta bake, dog doo and bin juice. Plus spontaneous murder, for no Homeric epic would be complete without a spot of violent tragedy.

Chris and Tina are like an autistic Mickey and Mallory Knox, railing against society with the lugubrious pragmatism of the Birmingham accent. The onset of homicidal spree is caused when a lumbering oaf drops litter in a tram museum causing Chris to 'accidentally' back into him. With one less "wanker" knocking about, his Furies turn to designer yuppies, shamanic hippies and righteous poshos, giving them a one-way ticket to Hell with his yummy Brummie accomplice, for Tina is both his protectress and muse. After all, she's the bab who gives him ethical justification for his actions: they're reducing people's noxious emissions. Fair trade and all. Improvised by actors Steve Oram and Alice Lowe, expanding upon characters they developed on the stand-up circuit, the maladjusted pair are well-drawn and gloweringly deadpan, and both as bad as each other: Chris mutters snide one-liners over his victims ("He ain't a person. He's a *Daily Mail* reader.") whilst Tina suspects strangers of asking her to handle poo- "He wanted me to shit in me hand and use it as a brown lipstick"- as a test of how far he's prepared to go to defend her.

However, this crude humour cannot quite sustain the running time and the perverse pilgrimage prematurely comes to an end when they meet Martin, amateur inventor of a mobile tent pod and all-round bore, who provides a new source of interest for the restless lunatic: the consequent resentment between Chris and Tina isn't given the space to develop and their eccentric banter begins to run out of (bin) juice.

Ben Wheatley's follow-up to *Kill List* is nonetheless handled with aplomb, the murder scenes gleefully overblown and grandiose: in slow motion, Chris graphically smashes a public school ponce's head in as Blake's 'Jerusalem' is solemnly intoned on the soundtrack; earlier, his braining of a button-down yuppie on a remote crag is intercut with crusty New Age sacrifice in the field below to the blaring accompaniment of Vanilla Fudge's 'Season Of The Witch': the banality of this hollow sociopath rooting out smug privilege is forged as both ironic patriotism and ancient pagan ritual.

Sightseers is an unruly, foul-mouthed odyssey that further signals Wheatley as a provocateur interested in unpleasant dregs that somehow act heroically. If they occasionally test one's patience, the filmmaker, like Chris, will probably be the last to care: he's shown you their world with all its filthy, scatological eroticism. Turn on or piss off.

Extras: *Behind The Scenes*, enhanced with rehearsal footage from the improvisations; jokey-pointless Outtakes; Two commentaries, a boisterous one with the cast, which Oram and Lowe effectively deliver in character, the other an amusingly self-deprecating technical one featuring Wheatley and his excellent photographer Laurie Rose. **JK.**

SHORT NOTICES



THE TALL MAN (2012) DVD/BLU-RAY

Out Now. Koch Media. Certificate: 15.

Not to be confused with *The Tall Guy*, Richard Curtis's screenwriting debut starring Jeff Goldblum, this is Pascal Laugier's follow-up to *Martyrs*. Both filmmakers are interested in making the audience suffer, Curtis with his endlessly Conservative, bland romcoms, the Frenchman with abject visions of cruelty suggesting that extreme anguish can offer transcendence- pain, actually. Unfortunately, despite its grim storyline of child-snatching, *The Tall Man* is too polite, perhaps sanitised for a North American audience. A depressed, ex-mining community keeps waylaying its young, believed to be taken by the eponymous figure. Jessica Biel, who appears not to have any blood vessels in her face, is equally lacklustre as the town physician, who finds herself caught up in the sinister kidnapping

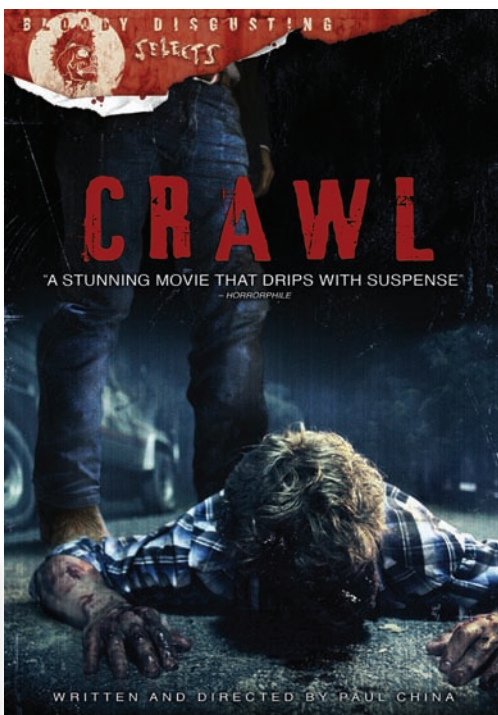


racket when her own son is taken. Atmospherically shot with diffuse light, the first hour has moments of progressive dread as Biel becomes increasingly victimised. But then, like *Martyrs*, the action snaps to a different tangent: unlike the other film, this strand is poorly realised, sidestepping the issues of child abuse and corrupt amnesty it raises. A pity. JK.

ONCE BEFORE I DIE (1966) DVD

Out Now. Starlite. Certificate: 18.

Once Before I Die refers to a request from a young recruit to lose his virginity with Ursula Andress in her prime. Wouldn't we all. The directorial debut of John Derek, the action follows Andress (married to the filmmaker at the time) and a band of US soldiers, trapped behind enemy lines in the Philippines after the strike on Pearl Harbour. Effectively a series of violent skirmishes, Derek shoots his war flick as if a Spaghetti Western, using extreme close-ups of wide eyes and screaming mouths to impose the horror of conflict alongside defiant foregrounding compelling a sense of suffering. Andress

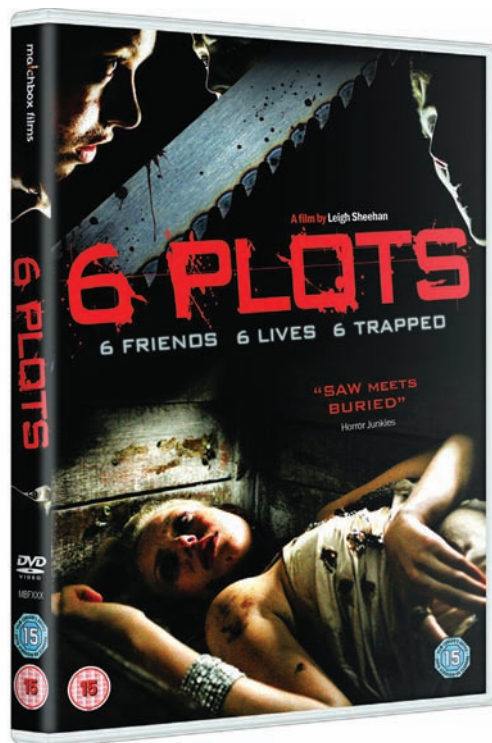


is an enigmatic, functional presence in her own vehicle, but it is Richard Jaeckel as Custer that bags shotgun: bald-headed and indemnified with gung-ho, he is a charming, jittery psychotic close to the boil. Far better than anything this narrow should have a right to be, *Once Before I Die* should be added to the bucket list. JK.

CRAWL (2011) DVD/BLU-RAY

Out Now. Arrow Video. Certificate: 15.

Aki Kaurismäki made *Leningrad Cowboys Go America* following a fictional band touring Stateside: this could be called *Croat Cowboy Goes Down Under*. Sharing a deadpan wit and deliberate pace with the Finnish filmmaker, Paul China's debut



is initially striking in its eccentricity. The Eastern European hitman at its centre is a lugubrious, metronomic presence, as one might imagine Roman Polanski to look in a Stetson, with added macabre twinkle.

There are moments of supremely controlled suspense, tight framing and intensely languid camera movement riveting and ratcheting. The melodramatic score, with violently sawed strings, complements the anxiety with savage countdown. Yet it all amounts to nothing, the few pay-offs too low-key and rather tame. This Hitchcock-cum-*Blood Simple* homage crawls with style over substance and feels like a dragged-out short film. *Carry On Croat Cowboy* maybe, but at the expense of the viewer's patience. JK.

6 PLOTS (2012) DVD

Out Now. Matchbox Films. Certificate: 15.

"It's amazing what you can do with open source code and Bluetooth," quips one smartass cyber-whiz, hacking into a Skype account to throw parents off the scent of a house party. But this insolence comes back to bite him on that complacent rump, when he and five other revellers wake up not only nursing a hangover but trapped in a coffin at an undisclosed location.

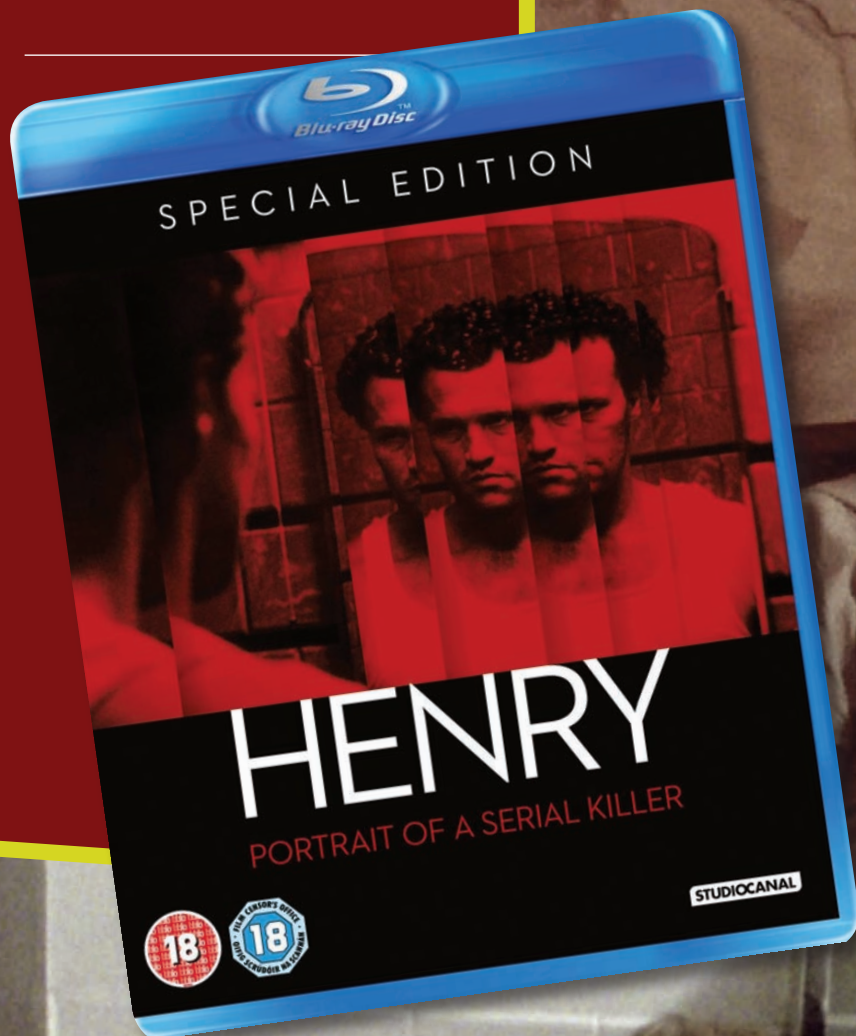
Clues: water rises in one, another's doused in petrol, a third is crawling with bugs: *Saw* interred with *Buried*, but not as good as either. Taunted by an evil emoticon, biker chick Brie must race against time to save her pals and abide by the rules- no adults involved. The anonymous villain is like a Z-grade teen-tantrum Silva, controlling their mobile coverage and live-streaming his tiresome game to the few who care.

Folk locked in boxes hardly provide visual appeal: spoiled know-it-alls don't bestow investment.

For all *6 Plots'* gadgetry and techno-concept, the filmmakers need to learn that it is still amazing what you can do with old-fashioned dynamics and decent characterisation. JK.

Playing celluloid crazies is all in a day's work for seasoned character actor Tom Towles, as Calum Waddell finds out...

TOM OF 1000 CORPSES



If someone ever asks you to think about the most hard-hitting horror movie heavies then the chances are that you will not ponder for too long before you are forced to acknowledge the brilliance of Tom Towles. Surely ranking alongside *The Last House on the Left*'s David Hess and *The Devil's Rejects*' Bill Moseley, 1986's *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* gave us two of the screen's most memorable mad psychopaths: Michael Rooker as the titular tormentor and Towles as his even more deranged sidekick Otis. Finally released to theatres in 1990, *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* launched Towles into infamy – and was that rare kind of low budget shocker: a critical favourite (even with old Barry Norman!), a commercial success and, without doubt, one of the most controversial chillers of all time. Well acted by all involved, *Henry* briefly launched Rooker into the A-list (*Sea of Love* and *Cliffhanger* soon followed), whilst Towles went on to secure leading roles in 1990's *Night of the Living Dead* rehash, Stuart Gordon's accomplished actioner *Fortress*, 1997's acclaimed *Gridlock'd* and John McNaughton's post-*Henry* horror outing *The Borrower*. Over the last decade, however, Towles has become famous for his parts in *House in 1000 Corpses* and its sequel *The Devil's Rejects* – and he can also be seen in 2006's blockbuster action farce *Miami Vice*. Yet, despite his often hairy cinematic persona, in person, Towles is a soft-spoken and charming



gentleman who was happy to sit down with *The Dark Side* for the following exclusive one-on-one...

First of all, can you tell me what you think makes you such a popular casting decision for horror movie directors?

I have no idea (*laughs*). Honestly man, I do not have a clue. I would say that it is one of those moments of phenomenology that is both awe-inspiring and delightful. When people like you it is a gift. I really am amazed that anyone even remembers me but whenever someone comes up to me and says, "Oh man I loved you in that movie" and then they remember the part and the words I said I am just in awe. There is no other response I can give except "thank you." I am very grateful and delighted and whilst I think I have done some very interesting films it is still something quite special to have people watch them. That really is a gift.

I would say you pretty much made your mark by playing one of the screen's most convincing psychopaths in *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*...

Oh stop it man (*laughs*).

I'm serious - you and Michael Rooker really scared the shit out of a whole generation of horror buffs...

Well that is very kind of you to say that because it means I did my job well but you have got to give kudos to Heath Ledger for the most believable and brilliant psychopath in recent memory. And I also want to recognise Brad Pitt in *Twelve Monkeys* as another absolutely brilliant wacko. But going back to *Henry* - I think what made the movie work is that it had a sort of documentary style to it. It had that visual grittiness to it that just kept you totally on edge.

Can you talk a little bit about making *Henry*?

Sure, everything just seemed to fall together on that film. It is, without a doubt, John McNaughton's vision of the project that

made it what it is but there was also an incredible innocence there. We never knew what we could and what we couldn't do. I think that if we had the technical knowledge that we all went on to have then we might have stopped making *Henry* half way through and said "Hey, maybe we need more money to pull this off." But at the time none of that mattered or was even in our thoughts - we all just wanted to make this terrifying little movie. From that came this unique and very strange brilliance. It was a dark film that was fun to make.

Did you pay attention to the shit-storm that *Henry* caused in the UK? The chief censor at the time, James Ferman, even re-edited the movie's notorious home video sequence in order to make it less shocking...

Oh I learned all about that much later on but, listen, *Henry* did not go un-shitted on in America either. There was controversy following that film around from the second it found a distributor. But that is the nature of anything that does not have, at its end, a completely moral wrapping up. In *Henry*, our guy - Michael Rooker - does not get caught - he goes on murdering and, presumably,

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD



still destroys everything in his path. But at the end he is the hero and that sort of thing upsets the old guard. By that I mean the people who believe they happen to be the guardians of our morality – which is an absurd and flawed concept to begin with. So when those people become upset they tend to react and, sadly, they usually have some sort of power. It is just the way events happen – and *Henry* created a massive disruption and distortion in its time frame. In that sense I am glad to have been a part of it. I think it also represented a new wave of filmmakers and it also fell into the trend of exciting new directors working within the horror genre – something that goes back to George Romero when he created *Night of the Living Dead*. And that was another great movie that did not go unchallenged. When you are on the cutting edge of something it is an exciting place to be, you know?

Did you ever see the sequel to *Henry*: *Portrait of a Serial Killer*?

No, I never saw the sequel and, of course, because I was very dead at the end of the first film I was not likely to appear in it anyway...

Although because it was a horror film sequel I suppose they could have found a way to resurrect you...

Well that is the theory in this genre (*laughs*). But I don't know. You would have had a challenge on your hands bringing Otis back from the dead.

Well the sequel was not much cop anyway...



That is probably one of the reasons I never saw it (*laughs*).

You went on to star as the villainous Harry Cooper in Tom Savini's remake of *Night of the Living Dead*. Of course, we now know how troubled the shooting of that film was – can you talk a little about being in the middle of it?

Night of the Living Dead was another madhouse with the same sort of overtone as *Henry* in terms of its physical conditions. But it was a unique process although, yes, it was not a comfortable time for Tom for a number of dark and personal reasons. Things in his

personal life collapsed in on him almost from the first day of shooting onwards. Nevertheless, I thought that his intellectual, creative and emotional fortitude throughout it was impressive. He hung in there and tried to keep it all together. First time directors are challenged in ways that they cannot possibly anticipate which is why I have so much respect for them when they succeed. John McNaughton was a first time director on *Henry*, Tom Savini was making his debut on *Night of the Living Dead* and Rob Zombie was the same on *House of 1000 Corpses*.

***House of 1000 Corpses* was a strange**



Left, as Harry Cooper in *Night of the Living Dead*

Below, as Sheriff Wydell in *House of 1000 Corpses*

you in his mock-grindhouse trailer *Werewolf Women of the SS* and gave you a cameo in *The Devil's Rejects* and *Halloween*...

I have done almost everything he has done and I am honoured to be a part of all of it. Working with Rob is always a blast and, regardless of if I am in them or not, I am just a big fan of his films and of him as a person.

Can you talk about working with Stuart Gordon on *The Pit and the Pendulum* and then, another great villainous turn, in *Fortress*?

Stuart is one of the masters of that genre. Again, it is just very good luck to get to work with a guy as talented as that. *Fortress*, of course, was a lot of fun and quite a big success when it came out. I was back in scumbag territory for that one of course (*laughs*). I played a very bad guy but I had fun doing it. And I died in a very spectacular way in *Fortress* too. I got shot to pieces – which was almost as brutal as when Otis went down in *Henry* (*laughs*).



one for you because you were cast, quite cleverly, against-type: You were the good-guy cop - the narrative hero instead of the typical scumbag villain...

Yes, and being cast against-type in *House of 1000 Corpses* was delightful and, in a way, I guess I have had a blessed career. Every once in a while I get very, very lucky. *House of 1000 Corpses* was just raw luck – and to be a part of Rob's projects is so amazing. How lucky can you possibly be to get to do so much stuff with a visionary like Rob? What made Rob phenomenal on *House of*

1000 Corpses is that all of his rock 'n' roll tour experiences prepared him as a first time filmmaker. In the middle of shooting *House of 1000 Corpses* I said to Rob, "Seriously man - how are you able to do this? This is something that overwhelms most people." He said "I'm used to taking a rock show around the world and things always go wrong and I'm used to dealing with that." And deal with things going wrong he most certainly did. *House of 1000 Corpses*, much like *Henry*, took years to get distribution and it upset a lot of people (*laughs*).

Right - and you obviously formed a bond with Rob because he cast

In the movie *Gridlock'd* you appeared opposite the late Tupac Shakur, who – sadly – was killed shortly after the film wrapped. He got great reviews for this leading role in this movie. What are your memories of him?

Tupac was one of the funniest guys I had ever met. At the time I had done a very popular TV show called *LA Law* with a writer-director called Vondie Curtis-Hall and he and I got along great. He is another phenomenally creative person and he called me in to do *Gridlock'd* and, of course, I knew who Tupac was but I had never heard his music. However, I got the chance to speak to him and get to know him during the shooting of the movie. I can tell you that he turned out



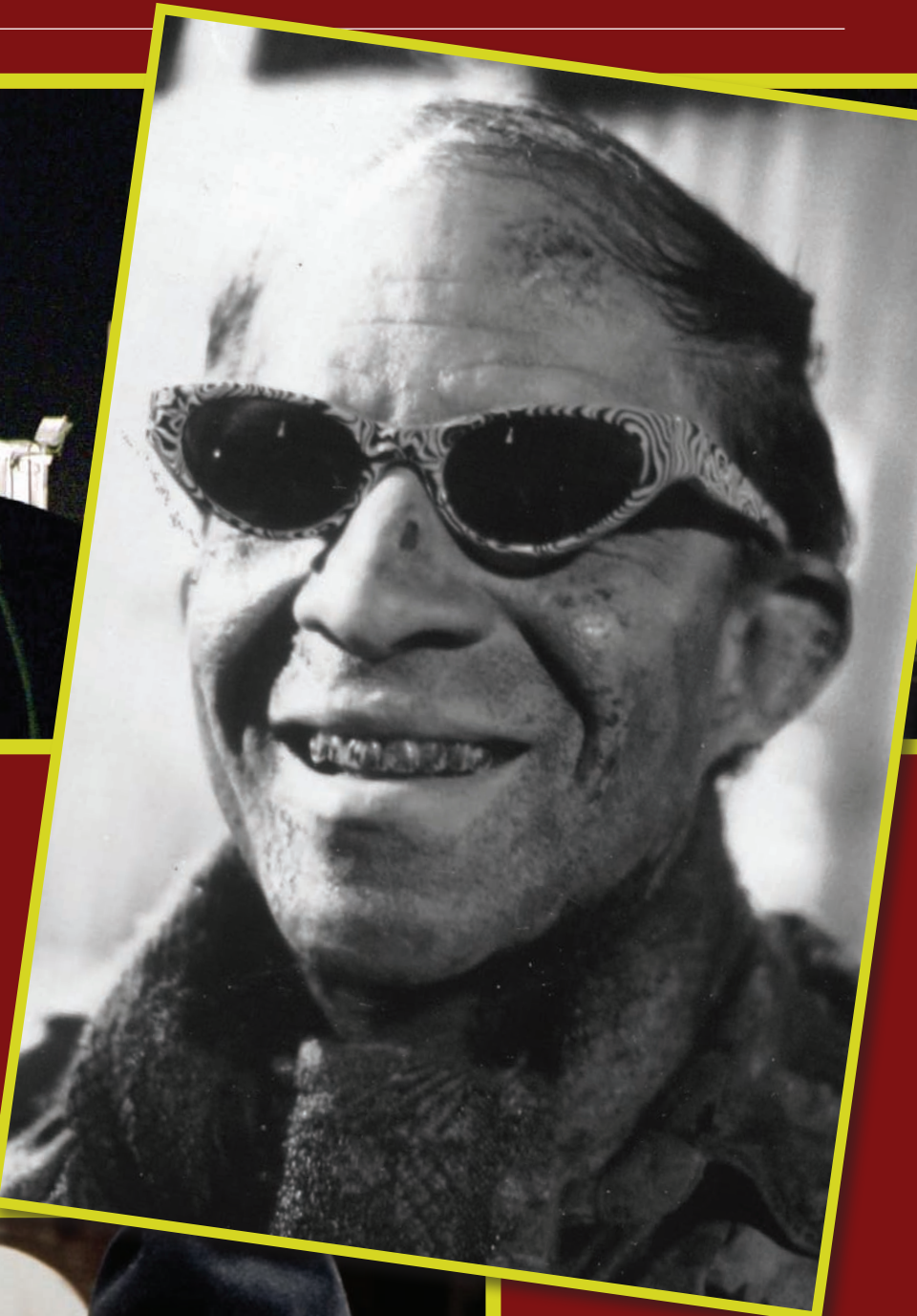
Above and left:
In *The
Borrower*

Below with
the late Tupac
Shakur in
Gridlock'd

to be one of the most exquisitely intelligent, brilliantly funny and potentially wonderful theatrical talents of all time.

Yeah, and to have that wiped out at the end of a gun is so pathetic isn't it?

It broke my fucking heart when he died, man. He had so much more in him that he could have done. If you watch *Gridlock'd* he was opening up, having fun and he was funny too. He and Tim Roth played brilliantly off each other in that movie and now he's dead. I don't think Tim Roth has played off anyone quite as well as that since *Gridlock'd* – these two guys just worked so well



together. And now all of that potential is gone. It broke my heart. It was such a tragic, tragic loss.

Finally, you have also appeared in a lot of television shows. What was your favourite one to work on?

Third Rock from the Sun – probably because it is the most immediate and contemporary updating of the Marx Brothers I have ever seen. That sort of madcap, absurdist comedy is straight out of the Marx Brothers and they added a little Monty Python and created a brilliant show. But, again, if I really, really like a show I always bust my butt trying to get to work on it. If you have a passion for something – a real passion – then the chances are it will work out for you. That's my uplifting message to finish this interview with (*laughs*).

THE EXPLOITATION AUTEUR

Matt Cimber might be most famous to UK horror fans for his 'video nasty' *The Witch who Came from the Sea*, but as Calum Waddell discovers, there is far more to this exploitation expert's CV...

Matt Cimber is one of the true greats of exploitation cinema – having made blaxploitation films (including 1974's *The Black Six* and the following year's *Lady Cocoa* and *The Candy Tangerine Man*), soft core sex features (such as 1970's *The Sensuous Female*) and even a healthy dose of female fronted peplum (1983's *Hundra* and 1984's *Yellow Hair*). The warmly spoken filmmaker has also had a career rife with controversy (1976's *The Witch Who Came from the Sea* made the British "video nasty" list and 1982's *Butterfly* is perhaps that decade's most famous critical casualty) – and one gets the impression that he wouldn't have it any other way. Although the director has been largely AWOL on the feature front since 1984's compellingly titled *Yellow Hair* and the *Fortress of Gold*, Cimber remains active in documentaries and producing and developing independent projects. So it was, then, that we had the chance to shoot the breeze with Cimber about his time working in the 'golden era' of grind-house grit and grime and what follows is a fascinating retrospective chat.

Let's go from your new film right back to the start of your career – tell me about your memories of working with Jayne Mansfield on *Single Room Furnished*... Well, you know, it was a whole different experience. Most people will tell you this, but Hollywood changed the whole look of my life. When I got out of school I was very young, 20 years old, and I started directing plays in New York. Luckily, my wife is now digging up all of my old reviews from *The New York Post*, *The Tribune* – papers of the time. But, yeah, I came from New York – I did plays, maybe about eight or nine plays in New York City and, anyway, there was a play that had opened on Broadway and then closed called *Burning Bright* and it



was one of the great screenwriters of all time he and I rewrote his play and I opened it off-Broadway with Sandy Dennis who eventually won an Academy Award for *Virginia Woolf*. Well the play was a big hit, and I did about ten or twelve plays in New York and very successfully adapted F. Scott Fitzgerald, Tennessee Williams – I had done all these things and that brought me to a revival, in New York, of a play called *Bus Stop* and I met the actress in this play who was Jayne Mansfield. It was the sixties and it was a wild world and, of course, film started to really intrigue me like never before. I had done a play in New York in the Provincetown Playhouse, which was a very prestigious venue and the play was called *Walk Up* and it was three one act plays about people living in a tenement. When I came to Hollywood Jayne actually knew about this play and she said, “You know I’d love to interpret this” and when we came to Hollywood a producer said he would produce and I had a feeling that these offbeat stories would work with her. So Jayne played a prostitute and she was wonderful and my cinematographer was the same guy who became Barbara Streisand’s cinematographer and won two Academy Awards (**László Kovács**) and he was fabulous. So there were some very good moments in that film, and then shortly afterwards Jayne was killed, which led into the film, and my life went into the direction where I stayed in Hollywood.

You did some early soft core movies as well of course...

Yes, but the soft core films weren’t really mine (*laughs*). You know, this is an incredible story so I’ll tell you what happened. I had a friend, and you are the first person I’ve told this story to, and all of this can be verified, I had a friend named Marvin Miller – he was a producer and a publisher. In 1970, or ‘69 – probably ‘69, a book hit the stands in America that immediately went to the top of the non-fiction list best seller, it was called *The Sensuous Woman* and the book was selling, it was being publicized and the name of the person that wrote it was really a pseudonym for the publisher – and his name was Lyle Stewart. So he had written the book okay? The book was doing well, Marvin Miller called me up and he says, “Matt do you want to adopt the book and adapt it because I’m buying the rights?” So, he bought the rights and it was a very nice offer. When I read the book – it was all, “Oh you get the cream and put it between her legs and then you do this and you do that”... the thing was so serious with all of this crazy stuff. I said, “Marvin – it’s a comedy, this is really a comedy, we have to take it lightly and people will accept it more, and you can’t really take it seriously anyway.” In any event, I started shooting the film and I used this young, attractive couple and what happened was we were about a week into production and the book said, “Whenever you feel the urge you should make love” so I had them making love on the steps of City Hall and all across Los Angeles, not naked but with their clothes on, and I had them

“JAYNE MANSFIELD, A LEGEND IN HER TIME HAS LEFT US A LEGENDARY CHARACTER . . . IN HER LAST AND FINEST PERFORMANCE”

—WALTER WINCHELL



on a flat bed going down Hollywood Boulevard. I did all this stuff and Lyle Stewart almost had a heart attack, he got really upset. But in about a week, we got a phone call telling us that *Life* magazine wanted to come and cover the shooting of the film. Well, a layout in *Life* magazine about your movie is the greatest opportunity in the world so Marvin takes it and their head photographer comes and he’s on the set every day shooting pictures. Well first of all the picture changed its title because Lyle Stewart got into a legal battle with Marvin Miller and the title of the picture was changed to *The Sensuous Female* and the picture does \$25 million at the box office, which in these days was astronomical. But one of the things that helped it was that *Life* magazine did this layout – the centerfold – and there’s me, with two cameras shooting, and it was either August ‘71 or ‘70. I have a copy – it hit the stands and the problem is the caption. It read, “Shooting film, pornographer Matt Cimber.” Well, I have got to tell you something – the picture never shows people naked, it shows them naked from a distance but it’s not hardcore. In any event the picture would be an R for sure, maybe even a PG13, but that was the one caption that absolutely haunted me and it was just shocking. I told my lawyer, “Maybe I should send them a letter” and he said, “No leave it, it will go away.” I guess in those days they were publishing *Life* every week or every month – I think it was monthly, and what happened was along came this other book called *Life Comes to*

the Movies, and they reissue this every ten years. I love when I hear stories, and I never tell people about this, but I’ll be at a party and I’ll hear people talking about how they want to get into *Life Goes to the Movies* and here I am – I want to get out (*laughs*). So, that is the long but short of that one – and I have to tell you it was very hard to live it down, I was a Californian pornographer. I came from New York, but here I am trapped in this image and people still say, “Did you make these porno films – like *Man and Wife*?” That was a stigma that lasted a long time for me and it took a lot to overcome it, although I made a lot of money on the film so I can’t really complain

And you also did *He and She*...

He and She, right – and there is nothing in it. Now there are some countries that took *He and She* and inserted some kind of things, but I never shot any of that. When *He and She* opened I got letters from every prominent Italian filmmaker telling me that they loved the girl, it was very interesting. But Marvin Miller made all the money on them and I got – in most cases – the bum wrap.

How did you get into making blaxploitation films?

When they started making the black exploitation, uh, that was a completely different thing for me...

And were you a fan of the movies that had been a success at that time such as *Shaft* and the Jack Hill movies – *Coffy* and *Foxy Brown*?

Not particularly, because they didn’t have the twist that I like. I didn’t have that much of a twist in *Lady Cocoa* but *The Black Six* was a different thing – and that was the first one that I made. *The Black Six* is based on a poem called *The Charge of the Light Brigade* – all I did was take *The Charge of the Light Brigade* and make it these guys coming back from Vietnam on motorcycles. The star of that film is Gene Washington – a famous NFL player in America – and he recently came on the television. Now, he is in a very prestigious position as the head of the player’s union for national football and he said that *The Black Six* was the first film, in American history, which portrayed a black man as the pure hero. Not badass – just a pure hero... and when I first made the film a few of the football players were very angry that they had to die at the end. They asked me, “Why does the black guy have to die?” But that was the twist and it had a reason behind it – it meant something. The film was popular with the black audience at the time – it was incredible. A very simple film that was made for a very low budget and I always remembered the poem. The poem, to me, was about people willing to die for an image. Yet most of the ‘blaxploitation’ films had reluctant heroes. They were all doing Clint Eastwood. Hollywood is obsessed with the reluctant hero, you

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SIX TIMES ROUGHER THAN 'SUPERFLY'!**
**See the 6 biggest, baddest and best
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The Black Six

JERRY GROSS Presents THE BLACK SIX • Produced and Directed by MATT CIMBER • Screenplay by GEORGE THEAKOS
Associate Producer RAFAEL JOHNSON • A MATT CIMBER PRODUCTION (Distributed by CINEMATION INDUSTRIES) R RESTRICTED

**GIT BACK JACK—GIVE HIM NO JIVE...
HE IS THE BAAAD'EST CAT IN '75**



THE CANDY TANGERINE MAN

STARRING: TOM HANKERSON and Introducing: JOHN DANIELS as "THE BARON"
FEATURING: THE ACTUAL HOOKERS and BLADES of the SUNSET STRIP—HOLLYWOOD
WRITTEN BY: GEORGE THEAKOS MUSIC BY: SMOKE DIRECTED BY: MATT CIMBER

RELEASED BY:
MOONSTONE

COLOR BY: MOVIELAB

know? "Oh go in there and save them", "Oh I don't want to, but now they've grabbed my kids so I will have to." Even *Rambo* is structured that way.

For most fans your blaxploitation classic is *The Candy Tangerine Man*...

Quentin Tarantino said to me, "You know Sam Jackson?" and he's familiar enough with Samuel Jackson to refer to him as Sam Jackson (*laughs*), he says, "Sam Jackson still says that *The Candy Tangerine Man* is his favorite film of all time, because it had such an impact." I mean - how do you make a hero out of a pimp? That was the challenge with *The Candy Tangerine Man*. And the reason I did it was because it was my answer to the black movement in America. Here is a black pimp and he's really a good guy with a nice wife and family living in the country. My film is only there to make the point that, you know, there are so few opportunities for black people in America that he took the only one he could to make a living. And the Superman thing, of him changing his office clothes and turning into this 'pimp by night' and what not, was that if he had been educated he would be a great accountant or lawyer but you never gave him that opportunity so he's going to do what he can to survive. So that was it, but then of course I got into the whole culture and what makes *The Candy Tangerine Man* so strange is the ambience... that is what makes the picture, not just the hero himself. I have to tell you that as much as I love *Butterfly* - and loved working with Orson (Welles) and Stacy (Keach) - I think that *The Candy Tangerine Man* is my personal favorite film. I like a lot of my other films and with some I think I could

have done better, but I always have this affinity for *The Candy Tangerine Man*.

These early films of yours, including *Candy Tangerine Man*, were also criticized for their violence of course...

Well, yes - you know, that was part of what we were in the sixties, which Hollywood - the majors - totally ignored, they would never think of that kind of film. But today the exploitation of the sixties and seventies is now the fare of the majors! We were the outcasts and now that is all they want in the studios because they realize that is what the public wants. There are so many things that change and not just the violence - when I made *Witch*, the idea for *Witch*... the public at the time still thought that Rock Hudson wanted to sleep with Doris Day. There wasn't the exposure that there is today so the violence had to be accepted and I don't know what else we can say about the fact that there were pictures that were made... the one that I loved the best was *The Wild Bunch* - I don't know if you've seen that one?

Yeah - the Peckinpah movie...

I worked with Sam, I helped him with a screenplay of his called *Bring me the Head of Alfredo Garcia* - and he was a crazy man. But *The Wild Bunch* was, to me, a brilliant film and it brought a whole new look to motion pictures. So there were some major films being made that started that movement. Sam loved the independent filmmaker, that's why he liked me, he loved the guys that didn't follow the rules and he was one of them too.

And *The Wild Bunch* is incredibly violent...

Oh yeah. But you know what it was? It was the beginning of the new technology, it was the squib. Nobody had used squibs before that - it was the idea... here came the squib and that guy went mad with it, you know? And the squib has changed so much and it has always been a funny thing for me because when Mario Puzo and I were writing *A Time to Die*, I had a scene where Rex Harrison, at the end of the film, had to come in and face off with Edward Albert. So Edward Albert shoots him right in the heart and you see this explosion. Well I remember when I took the squib up to Rex he said, "Are you going to put that nasty thing on me?" I said "yes" and then he was so nervous - the scene was hilarious and I didn't think at one point that he was going to let me do it. But the squib was this whole new thing - it was kind of fun...

Do you know that *The Witch Who Came from the Sea* was banned in Britain as a "video nasty" back in the early eighties?

Well, it was one of the lesser reactions to the film that I can remember. It caused so much mess in America so the fact that the British banned it is maybe a blessing (*laughs*). When the film premiered on Hollywood Boulevard, Millie showed up with Jack Nicholson and after the picture Nicholson came up to me in the lobby and said, "Man that is a very sick movie" (*laughs*). And I have to tell you that for him to say it was a sick movie - My God, you know? At that point I was very depressed.

I think what upsets a lot of people about



***Witch* is the theme of child abuse – and of course the film has a flashback where we see what happened to Millie Perkins as a child and, although it is very brief, it is very, very disturbing...**

Yes, yes – that scene was meant to be disturbing and it is an indelible image. We all talk about it, we all push it aside but the thing that will drive it home... I felt it was in my quest to try and feel so sympathy for the girl (Perkins) and just talking about it wouldn't do it. When you say this girl was abused by her father as a child, we've heard it over and over – but think about what it entails and when you see the image of it, you realize the tragedy. And of course the father was off the wall – we had him hiding in the closet, the little games that he would play with her, this violent domination of her as a child, stemming from his alcoholism. So, yes, it was a disturbing film and a very dark film. But I think that *Witch*... you know, I don't want to apologise for it but it is not entertainment. I think that it is an important film and the strange thing about it is that I think it is still as volatile today as it was then.

Was the cast and crew aware that they were making something quite so disturbing?

No, I don't think any of them, except for Mille, had an idea about how intense it was. But everybody seemed really dedicated...

The thing I like most about *Witch* is Millie – she is perfect in the lead role, and really projects this childlike innocence and tragedy throughout the film...

Oh yeah, she had that angelic look about her and this passive nature, she didn't come out like this vicious killer, and the balance was for her love for these two children. When they did *Monster* they equate the character with this girl that she has love for, and it is very much this kind of thing, except in *Witch* she loves these two children, they are her friends...

In many ways Matt you are most famous for *Butterfly* – simply because it was so badly panned when it came out and they even claimed you 'bought out' the Golden Globes so that the film would obtain some wins. That must have really hurt you...

Well, you know, here is another story – and this is an interesting story. Most people say the critics were unkind

to the film because they really haven't read all the reviews.

I know it was a big hit at Cannes, that's the whole irony of it, isn't it?

Exactly - when it opened at Cannes it was the miracle film of all time because my press agent on the film and I flew with a print to Cannes. We had no booking - we went in and I thought, "How the hell are we going to get the picture to screen here?" Well we got there on Sunday and we finally pleaded with people to give us the Ambassador Theatre at 8 o'clock on Wednesday morning. Have you had any experience of Cannes?

Yes – and that sort of time for a screening is like commercial suicide...

Right – it is like certain death because nobody gets up early and nobody wants to see your film at that time, it just doesn't really work. In any event, what happens is my press agent goes to *Variety* on Monday morning and puts a one inch ad in *Variety*. It cost neither one of us much money. The one inch ad broke on Tuesday and it said, "Ambassador Theatre, 8am, Orson Welles in *Butterfly*." Well, we were staying together in a room and we jumped out of bed at 7.30am on Wednesday and when we got to the theatre the doors were shut. So of course we thought, "Oh my God, what a tragedy – what are we going to do?" Then we went inside and people were actually sitting in

the aisles – people were even up against the walls, they were so jam packed in this theatre, this early... it was absolutely unbelievable. I saw Rex Reed – he was sitting against the wall on the right side and we couldn't move into the theatre because people were sitting in the aisles. Robert Ebert was sitting in the middle row with his secretary sitting on his lap, and I'm sure he enjoyed that (*laughs*). Now we could not believe it. Most people in Cannes don't watch a film more than three quarters of the way but this audience stayed until the very end. Rex Reed wrote a great review and Roger wrote a great review we thought, "Oh my God, we got ourselves a slammer." The picture opened in New York and *The New York Times* was not bad to us, it was a nice review and it did business at the Plaza Theatre on the East side of New York. Then when the picture came to Hollywood they crucified it and me along the way but not as much me as she (Pia Zadora). And they crucified her because they hated the fact, and they were jealous of, Hollywood beauty, you know? It was prejudice – prejudice against the little guy... and you still have it... For me, *Butterfly* is a very difficult film to have to defend because I think it is very good.

So the Golden Globes rumour is untrue?

I do remember this thing came out that (Zadora's husband and *Butterfly*'s bankroller) Meshulam Riklis had bought off the Golden Globes for Pia, which was nonsense. You didn't have to pay anybody to get Orson Welles a nomination or Ennio Morricone's music. And remember that *Butterfly* did well all around the world. The picture cost about \$2.5million to make and I guess it netted around \$10million. Now, in retrospect, there's a lot of interest in the film because it was one of Orson's last movies and Stacy Keach gives a wonderful performance, Edward Albert and James Franciscus – both really good performances. I was disappointed that Hollywood mashed it so much, it was really a "*Butterfly* bashing" (*laughs*) and it was kind of sad because I still think it is a very good film. But now it is a cult movie – and even at the time when it came out Vestron was the one that became the big video company and they sold a ridiculous amount of copies.

I am sure you've been asked this countless times in the past, but what was Orson Welles like?

Orson was a terrific guy. He was the type of guy that when he attached himself to the film he was really attached. I remember getting a phone call from Orson at three o'clock in the morning because he didn't sleep and I would answer the phone in my room and ask what he was doing calling at that time. Then he would just start talking anyway. Robert Ebert used to call me and ask, "Can you get Orson on the phone – just for half an hour, will he do this or do that?" and he did a lot of favors for me. I tried to help him. He had his project - *Don Quixote* and I called it "Orson's folly". He was making it forever and we all knew it was never going to get done - half the cast had already died – but I adored him. We had a conversation about *Citizen Kane*, which he refused to discuss with anybody. He said, "I'm afraid to talk about *Citizen Kane* to anyone because people see so much symbolism in it that I wasn't even aware of, at least no consciously, and I'm scared of sounding stupid". But I did get

the answer, and now I hear other people telling it, about the secret of Rosebud. He told me that.

That's the one about Rosebud being the pet name that Randolph Hearst used for his wife's private parts, right?
Exactly – I started that story.

That story is even explained on the *Citizen Kane* DVD you know!

Is it really? Well he told me this in 1981, and it was Hearst – the reason that Hearst got so ticked at him was because of him. Hearst felt that several of his guests had betrayed him, the ones that would come up and eat his food – he felt they had gone behind his back by telling this story. In 1981, I'm telling you – nobody knew the secret of Rosebud.

Tell me about another one of your stars – Laurene Landon, whom you cast in *Hundra* and *Yellow Hair*. Where is she now?

I love Lauren, terrific girl and a terrific talent. I saw her just recently and Quentin Tarantino really likes *Hundra* too. He really likes Laurene, and she was a good actress, very good in these roles, very gutsy. The last time I saw her was at a restaurant that we all hang out in, the whole film community, in Beverly Hills called Café Roma and she was there with a guy who has been her boyfriend on and off for many years named Larry Cohen.

The writer/ director Larry Cohen?

Yeah, I have known both of them for many, many years. I feel bad for her because I think so much more should have happened for her. I left a message for her telling her that Quentin is fan - maybe something can come of that...

With *Hundra* you can see that you have a fondness for professional wrestling – is this what led you into producing the infamous 1980s wrestling show *GLOW* (The Gorgeous Ladies of Wrestling)?

No, what led me to do *GLOW* was that I detest wrestling (laughs).

Really? After seeing *Hundra*, that is very surprising to me...

When I came back from Spain in 1985 the number one show on television was professional wrestling which, to me, was such a poor reflection on American culture. For a start I love sports, and I love athletes and I love pure sportsmanship – now a lot of these wrestlers are terrific athletes but as a sport it is just a horror. I did *GLOW* as a take off on wrestling. I mean, it was a satire, and the people that took it all so seriously were shocking, absolutely shocking. It was scary, and it became such a success



Opposite:
Pia Zadora, star of
Butterfly

Matt Cimber and The
Dark Side's Calum
Waddell

and, I don't know, I was in a situation where I could just satirize anything. If you look at that show... everybody when they first heard about it thought it was just going to be a tits and ass show and it was anything but that and I never intended for it to be like that. So I put comedy and satire in there, and at one point the distributor and the executive producer came to me after they saw the pilot episode and said, "You can't mix humor and wrestling" and they wanted to fire me. But the show went on to make history, I mean it really made history – the ratings for the show were incredible and I created 70 characters and managed to insult every society in America. These girls were absolutely wild. I wrote 1700 sketches for that show and in my heart I loved it because it was total freedom again. I had NACP against me and I had the Jewish Defamation League... I had a scene where a black girl was in the ring and she got watermelons thrown over her head by two Ku Klux Klan members – I did a devil sketch, I created a character called The Princess of Darkness and she was supposed to be the devil incarnate. We had every preacher in America protesting and

writing me letters of complaint. We could not believe it – and my feeling was that if God gets time on television on a Sunday morning then why can't it be the devil? It went wild – and the show went wild! I mean, the events that happened around were miraculous and then the Nielsen's came out. We found out that the demographic – the average viewer was fourteen year old girls and there was a good reason for that, it was the first time television had totally, independently had no male presence. There was no male domination - it was *Hundra* all over again. *Hundra* is really kind of light hearted but still with a strong message. With *Hundra* every scene was written as a metaphor for the relationship between men and women over the centuries. *Hundra* is entertaining – you can have fun with it and it has some sex in it, some action – and it has an unusual leading lady.

You followed up *Hundra* with *Yellow Hair and the Fortress of Gold*. Tell me about making this picture...

Yellow Hair was my obsession with Saturday morning serials as a kid. We went to the theatre for 11 cents and I used to have to turn in three milk bottles to the grocery store to make nine cents and then my mother would give me two cents so I had enough money to go. I would see 25 cartoons and an action/ adventure – and it would be a serial. Each week there would be a different episode of the serial – and that is what *Yellow Hair* is. The original title when I wrote it was *Yellow Hair and the Pecos Kid*, and it was this action/ adventure about a girl who was half Indian and half white and who was really in love with the Pecos Kid. He really loved her too and it was about their search for gold and riches and the Aztec... I just really enjoyed making that film. It never quite came off the way I wanted it to but it did huge business.

Why so long between projects? Your last film, *Yellow Hair and the Fortress of Gold*, was made way back in 1984!

Well, you know, it is a question of what attracts you over the years. As you say, the last film I made, which was in 1984, was *Yellow Hair* and after that, when I returned from Europe back to the States I worked on a television series...

That was *GLOW* (The Glorious Women of Wrestling), right?

Right, *GLOW*. I got wrapped in that until almost 1991 and then cable was just coming in and for years I started making documentaries.

It is surprising that so few of them are listed on your imdb because whenever I speak to you, it turns out you are busy on yet another new documentary...

Yeah, I don't know how many of them I have made over the years, but it there must be about 30 hours worth of documentaries credited to me somewhere. I did most of the stuff on Egypt and the pyramids, I spent a great deal of time doing documentaries on Jesus, I did *Mysteries of the Pyramids* I did one on gothic cathedrals and I have to tell you that in those eight years, starting from about '92, those years were the most fabulous... I ended up shooting most of the stuff for myself. Digital came in and we didn't need big crews for documentaries – so I started off with A and E... I don't know if you are familiar with them but they are on cable, and it was at a point in my life where I had made so many films – and this was an area of history that I just really enjoyed.

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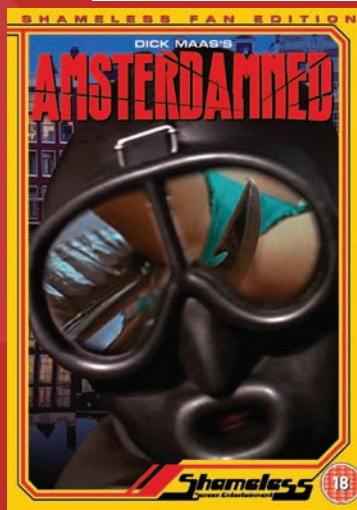
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The House On The Edge Of The Park: This sleazy shocker stars *Last House On The Left* psycho David Hess as a crazed rapist who, along with his brain-dead mate John Morghen, terrorises a group of spoiled yuppies after gate-crashing a party in a posh mansion. One rich kid is thrown into the swimming pool and when he tries to climb out Hess urinates on him. Torture, rape, lesbianism and a 9mm castration are on the menu here in a famed video nasty that is essential viewing.

Phantom Of Death: When he discovers that he is losing his hair, Michael York doesn't just go out and buy a syrup - he goes bonkers and starts killing people! The gore starts from the opening credits, with a splattery neck-slicing and a woman having her head forced through a window. Gorgeous scream queen Edwige Fenech joins the reliable Donald Pleasence, who plays a retiring cop on hand to investigate the crimes, in a stylish giallo from the director of *Cannibal Holocaust*.

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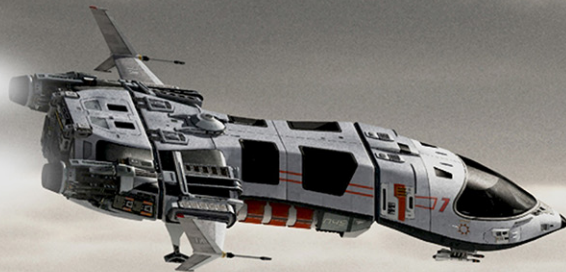
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